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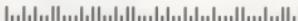
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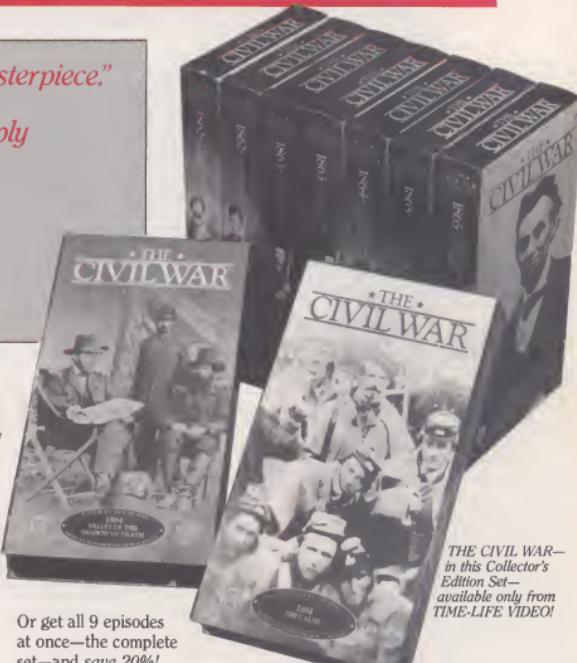
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**COVER:** At Aspern-Essling, Austrian Archduke Charles (portrayed here by Krafft) demonstrated to a surprised Napoleon that a member of the Hapsburg imperial family could be a courageous and skillful leader—and that the Austrian army had teeth (story, P. 50).  
**ABOVE:** In Michael Echter's *Ungarnschlacht am Lechfeld*, German and Magyar warriors struggle over the fate of Central Europe in an age of steel and high adventure (story, P. 34).

## 6 EDITORIAL

## 8 PERSONALITY

In 1915, the British expected to quickly defeat Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and his "damned kaffirs." In 1918, they were still trying.  
*By Barry Taylor*

## 10 ESPIONAGE

A Hessian turncoat switched sides again to help the British in their raid on a "nest of rebel pirates."  
*By Andrew A. Zellers-Frederick*

## 18 WEAPONRY

Ramesses III had a problem—raiders from the sea. His solution was to build Egypt's first seagoing navy.  
*By Charles W. Gardner*

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While Stalin saw the error in his relationship with his generals, Hitler was coming to an opposite conclusion.  
*By William P. Bradley*

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From the revolution to the present, Fort Benning preserves the American infantryman's long, proud heritage.  
*By Lynn Grisard Fullman*

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*Interview by William F. Wu*

As the Chinese Fifty-third Army fought its way up Snow Mountain, the staff of the American 22nd Field Hospital that accompanied it found themselves running short of medical equipment and even rations.

## 34 SURVIVAL OF THE STRONG

*By Jon Guttman*

King Otto's Germans and Lél's Magyar raiders had narrowly missed each other in 954 AD, but the Magyar siege of Augsburg a year later set the Saxon king and the eastern invaders firmly on a collision course.

## 44 NAKED SWORD IN HAND

*By G.P. Stokes*

While Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott's small army marched on Mexico City, a flabbergasted Duke of Wellington exclaimed to a friend: "Scott is lost! He cannot capture the city and he cannot fall back on his base!"

## 50 BATTLE AT FLOOD TIDE

*By David Johnson*

As a fresh reserve of Austrian grenadiers massed outside Essling, French General Jean Rapp suggested to General G. Mouton: "Let's charge them with the bayonet. If it comes off, we'll both get the credit; if it doesn't, I'll take the blame."

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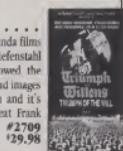
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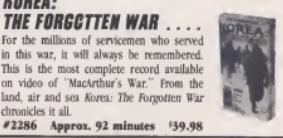
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## Earning His "Mexico Spurs" *Who was the young officer on a railroad handcart?*

That the 19th-century Mexican War was a showcase for the American general Winfield Scott as a commander in the field is well known. Quite so. And it certainly was an early proving ground for a raft of young U.S. officers whose names would become icons of the American Civil War—Robert E. Lee, Braxton Bragg, Ulysses S. Grant and so many others. (See story, Page 44.)

Next to earn "Mexico spurs" was John J. Pershing, a 20th-century leader of men. His early fame came mostly from his chase after Pancho Villa, but Pershing was already a general—and only a year away from his command of the forces sent to fight World War I "Over There," in Europe.

The riddle we pose here is: Who was the soon-to-be equally famous, 20th-century American general who proved his mettle as a young captain in still another Mexican "incident"?

The time in this case was spring of 1914, and the place was Veracruz, Mexico. The port city had been seized by the U.S. Navy and was occupied by a U.S. Army brigade while the Woodrow Wilson administration in Washington sought to avoid overt war with Mexico and its hot-headed General Victoriano Huerta. The Army's Chief of Staff, Leonard Wood, wanted accurate intelligence on the situation at Veracruz—where 11,000 Mexicans under Huerta had the American brigade under siege.

Sent, on an hour's notice, straight from Wood's general staff in Washington was our young officer—with an informal mandate to operate a bit independently of the field commander on the scene. And in Veracruz, he found the troops were immobilized due to a lack of horses and mules.

What about the handy railroad tracks snaking in and out of the city? Well, no locomotives...but our man then heard that a handful of the necessary



United States Marines patrol outside Veracruz, Mexico, in April 1914—only the start of a sticky "incident," during which a young U.S. Army officer would first distinguish himself.

engines were hidden away in the hostile territory outside of Veracruz. A reconnaissance clearly was in order. Meanwhile, an American army private who fell into Mexican hands was executed. Clearly, this would be a risky mission for the newcomer.

Wasting no time, however, he soon was careening into Mexican territory aboard a railroad handcart commandeered for his nighttime excursion in search of operable locomotives.

He was accompanied by a recently sobered-up engineer and two railroad firemen, all themselves Mexicans who had been promised \$150 in gold for successful completion of the reconnaissance mission. Before departing the American lines at the edge of the city, our scout of course had searched the engineer, thus recovering both a .38 and a knife.

Pumping away at the rail handcart, they traveled for some miles to the southeast before reaching the Jamapa River, its rail bridge in a disheartening state of collapse. But they crossed...aboard a hastily "commandeered" skiff of sorts. On the far side, they found ponies near a shack and commandeered them.

Another handcart turned up, and the four resumed travel by rail. At each village our man lashed himself to one of his

Mexican guides for safekeeping and circled the potentially hostile community by foot, picking up the handcart and its two operators on the far side.

And so it went, on into the musty night, until at 1 a.m. and 35 miles beyond jump-off point, they found five locomotives at a place called Alvarado. Two were mere switch engines, but the other three were "fine big road pullers in excellent condition except for a few minor parts which were missing," the officer later wrote in his *Reminiscences*. They were, "just what we needed." And so...the next step: "I made a careful inspection of them and then started back."

The return trip was a bit more eventful for the American and his Mexican companions. At Salihas, five armed men attacked—and our man shot two.

At Piedra, it would be 15 mounted assailants, all armed and all difficult to see in the mist that covered the area. In the exchange of fire here, our man heard the whistle of nearby bullets—three rent his clothing and one of his companions was actually hit. Our man, in the meantime, coolly shot four of the attackers.

Then came Laguna—three gunmen this time. Another hole in the American officer's uniform, and still another assailant bit the dust.

The Jamapa, of course, had to be recrossed, and while the small party was doing so, their local skiff sank. Our man carried his wounded Mexican helper to safety. The rest was easy. All four resumed the first handcart and soon crossed into American lines.

As events turned out, there was no war with Mexico...there was, instead, in Europe, World War I, in which our man would earn seven Silver Stars for valor on the battlefield. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor at Veracruz, but he wouldn't receive that rare honor until World War II—Douglas MacArthur.

C.B.K.



## Prussian Jungle Tactics

*In Africa during WWI, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck simply wouldn't quit.*

By Barry Taylor

**I**t was a typical-looking Prussian officer who arrived in Germany's East Africa colony soon after New Year's Day of 1914—close-cut hair, neat mustache, trim posture. He was, in fact, also a gifted military leader, one with a quiet sense of humor who could get the best out of his men... and in the years immediately ahead, he would have to.

Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck was born in Saalouis, Germany, in 1870. After attending the military school at Kassel, he was assigned to duties in Prussia. Some sources say he was commissioned in the artillery, others that he served in the 4th Regiment of Guards. Whatever the case, his first taste of foreign duty was in China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

He served next, briefly, in the Cameroons, German West Africa, before returning to the homeland. His career then took a more unusual turn with his assignment as commander of the marine battalion at Wilhelmshaven.

He saw more of Africa while on detached service with the pre-Boer War South African forces under Louis Botha. Von Lettow-Vorbeck was fascinated by the Boer commandos—especially their loose, guerrillalike way of fighting that he was later to emulate. Ironically, he was later to fight against some of these same Boer commandos he admired.

His next active service was in the Herero and Hottentot rebellions in Southwest Africa (1904-1906). First serving on the general staff, he later commanded an independent company sent into the bush.

Wounded in the eye in 1906, Lettow-Vorbeck returned home, stopping off en route in "German East," Berlin's colony on the opposite coast of Africa.

With war rapidly approaching in 1914, the 44-year-old Lettow-Vorbeck was ap-



*The British expected Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and his small colonial force of Germans and East Africans to be little more than a temporary nuisance. They could not have been more wrong.*

pointed commander of the Schütztruppe, the defense force of German East Africa.

As he toured his new command, he was conscious of the uneasy position of German East Africa and the sparseness of his forces. The Schütztruppe, numbered no more than 1,800 active-duty fighting men, reinforceable to perhaps 5,000 by calling up reservists. With these, his African askaris and some white German colonial volunteers, he had to defend an area twice the size of Spain. The colony was bordered on the north by British-controlled Uganda and by British East Africa, with its important railway running from Mombasa to its terminus at Kisumu on Lake Victoria. To the southwest was British Rhodesia. To the

West was the Belgian Congo, and to the southeast, Portuguese East Africa, both British allies.

When World War I began in August, Lettow-Vorbeck knew the British would have two main objectives in the East Africa theater: first, they had to protect the Uganda Railway, the lifeline of British East Africa. Second, they were aware that German East Africa could be used as a base for the Kaiser's commerce raiders in the Indian Ocean, such as the cruiser *Königsberg*.

Initially, Lettow-Vorbeck planned a defensive war, concentrating his troops at the town of Neu Moshi near Mount Kilimanjaro. Not only was this an ideal spot from which to raid the Uganda Railway, but it was also the terminus of the German colony's Northern Railway, which began at the port of Tanga. Using this railroad and the more southern Central Railway, which stretched 800 miles from Dar es Salaam to Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika, he could rapidly move his field companies to trouble spots.

The British, meanwhile, were hastily organizing 4,000 troops in British East Africa into Indian Expeditionary Force C. Force C would attack Moshi, while a Force B from Bombay would land at Tanga and cut across the German colony to link up with Force C.

Force B was a collection of battalions from various regiments—about 8,000 men—commanded by Indian Army General Arthur Atkins. Reaching the palm-fringed coast, the first wave of 2,500 Indian and British soldiers stumbled ashore, and were promptly driven back by a lone German machine gun. The British regrouped, and landed more troops. Spearheaded by the 101st Bom-

*Continued on page 12*

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# Privateer's Haven

## A British raid that stirred accusations of a "massacre."

By Andrew A. Zellers-Frederick

By the fall of 1778, the American War for Independence was well into its fourth year, no end in sight. The Royal Navy clearly had mastery of the seas, yet it was unable to eliminate the numerous privateers who preyed on British shipping and commerce. The British labeled these rebels, who claimed they were in the service of the Patriot cause, as pirates, despite the "legality" of their "letters of marque" issued by the Continental Congress or the individual state governments.

This was "a short, easy, and infallible method of humbling the English," noted John Adams for one. And so it was that from many hidden inlets, coves, and harbors along the East Coast, countless rebel warships of all sizes disrupted the tenuous Atlantic Ocean supply lines for the king's army in the field.

One such "nest of rebel pirates," as British General Sir Henry Clinton called it, was the village of Chestnut Neck on New Jersey's Little Egg Harbor. It had the perfect harbor for such activity—unmarked sandbars and an intricate channel. At many times, 30 or more vessels, either raiders or their prizes, could be seen at anchor.

An additional factor making this the most important of New Jersey's privateer ports was its location—from here, captured British supplies could be taken overland for sale in Philadelphia, a mere 35 miles away. That route served to avoid the blockaded Delaware Bay.

The British could not ignore Chestnut Neck's nefarious activities, not after the year 1778 proved to be so bountiful for the Patriot privateers. More than 20 assorted vessels, all filled with supplies needed by the British army, were captured and hauled into the bustling village. As a final straw, two very important merchantmen, the *Major Pearson* and the *Venus of London* from the Irish supply convoy, were seized. This event caused



British sea power is challenged in Hyder Ally and HMS General Monk, by Louis Philippe Crepin. At Little Egg Harbor, N.J., in 1778, the British tried to eliminate a key "nest of rebel pirates."

the Royal Navy's leadership in New York to order the destruction of the harbor.

Captain Henry Collins of the Royal Navy sloop *Zebra* was given command. General Clinton ordered him to destroy the "considerable salt works" and the "large depot of Naval stores" at Chestnut Neck. The *Zebra* was supported by the sloops *Vigilant* and *Nautilus*, two galleys, and an assortment of smaller armed vessels and transports. On board the ships were the troops charged to carry out the actual physical destruction of the privateer community. Under the command of the gifted and clever Captain Patrick Ferguson—a remarkable officer who invented the first practical breechloading rifle and whose military exploits are almost legendary—were some 400 soldiers drawn from the 5th Regiment of Foot and the 3rd Battalion of the Loyalist "New Jersey Volunteers." On September 30, 1778, the small fleet set sail from New York.

The British force required complete secrecy to succeed in its proposed raid, but Patriot spies dutifully reported the expedition's movements to General Washington. As it happened, he had other worries at this time—a larger British force, more than 7,000 men, had re-

cently landed in northern New Jersey. Naturally, much of his attention was focused on this serious threat. Nevertheless, the Congressional Board of War "resolved, that the Legion, under the command of Count [Casimir] Pulaski, be ordered to proceed immediately to assist in the defense of Little Egg Harbor."

Chestnut Neck itself was somewhat prepared for the pending British attack. During the previous year, after the threat of an enemy raid, a small fort, armed with about 10 cannon removed from a beached privateer, was constructed. However, for some unknown reason, these weapons were now missing.

But other local defensive measures had been taken to counter the British land forces. The New Jersey militia was summoned by Governor William Livingston; the area around Little Egg Harbor was fully alerted by express riders. This early warning permitted four privateers to escape to the open sea, and a number of smaller craft were successfully hidden in numerous secret coves and inlets.

A storm prevented Collins' fleet from reaching its objective until October 5. Ferguson, however, decided to take action before the entire countryside could organize and oppose his troops—smaller vessels filled with soldiers went ahead. Under the Royal Navy's covering cannon fire, Ferguson's men landed, he later noted, "with ease." The Patriot militia resisted for a short time, but then "the fire from the rebels was effectively stifled." Ferguson's troops "soon drove into the woods the skulking Banditti." By military standards, the landing was flawless. Only minor wounding of a British soldier in the leg prevented this part of the operation from being completely free of casualties.

As the king's forces explored the area, they discovered 10 previously captured merchantmen. To prevent further use

*Continued on page 72*

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## PERSONALITY

Continued from page 8

bay Grenadiers and the Kashmir Rifles, Force B reached the outskirts of Tanga on November 4.

With only one company initially on the scene, Lettow-Vorbeck had been rushing additional men along the Northern Railway until he had gathered together almost 1,000 officers and askaris, including a scraped-together company of European settlers and merchant seamen. By the next day, however, the savage street fighting in Tanga was over. After suffering almost 2,000 casualties and being attacked by, among other things, a swarm of disturbed bees, the British withdrew.

For most of 1915, Lettow-Vorbeck sent raiding parties into British territory, destroying sections of the Uganda Railway and causing considerable havoc. The British, in turn, organized "auxiliaries"—settlers enlisted in rather flamboyant units, such as the East African Mounted Rifles. These units gained invaluable lessons in bushcraft while the Germans received, a far more precious commodity—time.

The Royal Navy, meanwhile, had quickly found the *Königsberg*, which had bolted for the delta of the Rufiji

River, and began a months-long campaign, stretching into 1916, of slowly pulverizing the German vessel with naval gunfire. When the *Königsberg* was no more than a half-sunken wreck, the Germans carefully salvaged some of her 4.1-inch guns.

By January 1916, the British had two divisions, some 30,000 men, ready for the big push against Lettow-Vorbeck. In February, the South African General Jan Christian Smuts was appointed commander of all British forces in East Africa. Smuts, known as "Slim" (Afrikaans for "sly"), had fought the British with distinction during the Boer War. He devised a plan that called for a two-pronged assault: while the 1st Division circled around Kilimanjaro and attacked the Germans from the northwest, the 2nd Division would break through the Pare Hills, taking the town of Taveta, which was occupied by the Germans even though it was in British territory.

The action began on March 5, 1916. South African cavalry under Brigadier Jacobus van Deventer entered Taveta without a fight on March 10—the Germans had already left. Withdrawing southward in good order, Lettow-Vorbeck fought off an attack at Latema-Reata, where, during the night of March 12, his machine-gunned cut two battalions of South Africans to pieces.

Then on March 20, he made one of his few blunders by turning to attack Smuts' 1st Division in the belief that it was only a screening force. Ordering 600 askaris to make more than 20 wild bayonet charges, the *Schützengruppe* commander lost more than 200.

The combatants finally broke apart—the British and South Africans almost collapsing from exhaustion and hunger, the Germans hurrying southward. While Smuts had not ended the campaign, he had won a tactical victory: the Germans no longer threatened the Uganda Railway, nor would they again.

While the 1st Division kept up the pressure on the German rear guard, Smuts van Deventer's cavalry, now increased to divisional size, in a great swinging arc to take the Germans on the flank. But this time it was Smuts who made the mistake. Hundreds of miles from their home base, van Deventer's horses had begun to starve. Fever reduced his column by half. Apart from one bruising, indecisive action on May 9, the South Africans had made little contact with the enemy.

British forces entered Dar es Salaam on September 4, 1916, after the Royal Navy bombarded the city. The German governor had already fled to join Lettow-Vorbeck's field companies. By the autumn of 1916, the German commander



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had only 1,100 Europeans and 7,300 askaris fit for action. His artillery consisted of 16 small field guns, plus four 4.1-inch guns from the Königsberg, manned by sailors. To compound matters, 7,000 Portuguese had advanced into German territory. Lettow-Vorbeck's only welcome news was that he had been awarded the *Four le Mérite* by a grateful Kaiser.

Though better armed and clothed than the Germans, the British were suffering heavily from Blackwater fever and dysentery. During the last few months of 1916, the British high command began sending in West Indian and Nigerian units, while simultaneously withdrawing British and South African troops. More than 15,000 British soldiers were returned home and discharged as medically unfit, worn out by their ordeal.

By December 1916, the main body of the Schützgruppe was south of the Rufiji River, and Smuts came up with his last plan to beat the Germans. Four British columns would drive south to link up with the 1st Division, which would strike inland from the port of Kilwa. The columns moved out on New Year's Day, 1917—and things went badly from the start. The country was terrible to march through. Six hundred mules, essential for carrying supplies, died within two weeks. The German-led askari snipers gave ground stubbornly. And once again, the

main body of Lettow-Vorbeck's troops evaded encirclement.

On January 20, 1917, Smuts left to represent South Africa at the Imperial Conference in London. Command of the British East African Expeditionary Force fell first on Maj. Gen. Reginald Hoskins for five months, then on van Deventer. With more African troops, including a greatly expanded Kings African Rifles (KAR), the British continued their push.

Lindi, the chief southern port of German East Africa, was occupied by the British at the start of the campaign. In October, using information supplied by local villagers and irregular scouts, the encircling British brought the Germans to bay at Mahiwi, south of Lindi.

The four-day battle pitted 2,000 askaris against 4,000 British Empire troops. Lettow-Vorbeck wore his full-dress uniform—he was now a major general—and the British commander, General O'Grady, marched up and down in full view of German snipers, urging his men forward. In bitter fighting, German askaris, Nigerians and West Indians fought hand-to-hand. After the two sides disengaged on October 18, the badly mauled Germans once again retreated to the south.

By October 24, 1917, German forces in East Africa had only enough supplies for only six more weeks of fighting.

Gathering his sick and wounded, Lettow-Vorbeck ordered Captain Max Looff, the former commander of the Königsberg, to surrender them to the British. Looff surrendered on November 26 to a contingent of the KAR. The day before, leading 2,000 fighting men and 3,000 porters, women and children, Lettow-Vorbeck had crossed the Rovuma River and invaded Portuguese East Africa.

The Germans stayed in Portuguese East Africa for nine months. Even here, the KAR dogged their heels, but, never closed in for the kill, knowing that starvation and disease were doing their job for them. In almost four years of fighting, only two ships had managed to land some supplies to Lettow-Vorbeck, and one of them had already been sunk by the British but close enough to shore for part of the cargo to be salvaged—including 1,800 new Model 98 rifles.

In March 1918, Lettow-Vorbeck marched and doubled back across Portuguese East Africa. By mid-1918, however, his command had been whittled to less than 200 Germans and 1,400 askaris. On September 28, 1918, Lettow-Vorbeck recrossed the Rovuma into German East Africa and advanced northward along the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa. KAR columns rushed to intercept him. On November 12, the day after the Novem-

## "Ya fought a good fight, Reb!"



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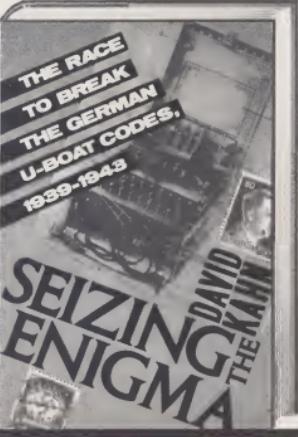
  
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ber II armistice, his askaris fought a skirmish near the town of Kasama. It, apparently, was the last combat of World War I.

The next day, von Lettow-Vorbeck, bicycling ahead of his troops, learned the war in Europe was over. It was arranged that the Germans would march to the Northern Rhodesian town of Abercon, escorted by a KAR battalion. Here, on November 25, 1918, in a pouring rain, Lettow-Vorbeck formally surrendered the Kaiser's forces in East Africa.

The askaris were sent home, and the German officers were taken to Dar es Salaam and kept there until January 17, 1919, when they were taken by ship to Rotterdam. Arriving in Germany, von Lettow-Vorbeck led his ragged survivors in a triumphant parade through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. He was the only German general who was not defeated in World War I. The British had spent 72 million pounds on the campaign in East Africa, and Lettow-Vorbeck had cost them 60,000 casualties—four out of five from disease.

Lettow-Vorbeck had immense prestige in Germany after the war, a period in which Germany was a shambles. Anarchists, communists and returned veterans manning right-wing volunteer corps battled each other on the streets.

Always very conservative—typical of his profession and class—von Lettow-Vorbeck took command of the volunteer Lettow Division in 1919 and broke the Berlin general strike that had threatened to deteriorate into an actual workers' rebellion. The following year, he commanded the Reichswehr Division and put down the communistic Spartacist uprising in Hamburg.

He resigned from the army in 1920 and served as a deputy in the Reichstag. Although committed to the right side of the political spectrum, he had no time for the Nazis. After trying unsuccessfully to organize a conservative opposition to Hitler, Lettow-Vorbeck resigned from the Reichstag in 1930.

Hitler briefly considered him as a possible ambassador to Great Britain in 1935, but his opposition to the Nazi Party had been too vocal. Blacklisted and watched carefully, Lettow-Vorbeck, once the hero of Africa, had to earn his living as a gardener. His two sons were killed in World War II.

Ironically, Smuts and other British officers sent him food parcels. There is a story that during the war a group of German officers sent an emissary to meet British secret agents in Switzerland. Who, asked the Germans, would the British find acceptable as the leader of a new Germany if the Nazis were overthrown? The answer from Winston Churchill: Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. □

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## Mystery Invaders

*The first naval battle in history was decisive in outcome.*

By Charles W. Gardner

In the eighth year of the reign of Ramses III (circa 1190 BC), Egypt was invaded by a coalition of seaborne raiders known as the "Peoples of the Sea." Although it had declined somewhat, Egypt was still a world power, and under the leadership of Ramses, its last great warrior king, the invasion was repulsed.

On Ramses' funeral reliefs at Medinet Habu are pictures of a great naval engagement and an account, in hieroglyphic characters, of what occurred—the first sea battle of which we currently have a written account.

But... who were the Peoples of the Sea?

Two main groups appear on the reliefs: the Peleset and Sherdan (that is, Plst and Shrdn, since Egyptian hieroglyphs have no vowels). They are distinguishable by their headgear; the Peleset wore helmets ornamented with a ring of feathers and the Sherdan wore helmets with horns on them. But the Egyptian scribes also mentioned several other seaborne raiders—the Shekelesh, "Teresh," "Ekwesh," and "Denyen."

There is much debate about their identities—and no satisfactory answer.

One theory is that they came from the western Mediterranean. The Shekelesh are thought to be Sicilians and the Sherdan, Sardinians. In support of this theory is archeological evidence that cities such as Pylos and Mycenae in the Peloponnesus were destroyed at about this time, possibly by the Sea Peoples on their way to the Levant.

Another theory is that they were Mycenaean Greeks—the traditional date of the Trojan War is 1194 BC. By this school of thought, the terms Ekwesh and Denyen are Egyptian corruptions of "Achaean" and "Danaan." According to



Flexing their naval muscle, sailor and marines of Ramses III's new fleet (left) slash into a squadron of Philistine raiders (in feather-topped helmets) and their horn-helmeted allies.

Homer, after the expedition to Troy, Menelaus visited Egypt and returned with "seven ships filled with treasure." But it is hard to believe that the epic poets would fail to narrate an expedition against a place like Egypt, regarded as fabulous by the early Greeks, "the land of sorcerers" and the site of "hundred-gated Thebes," the richest city on earth.

The most plausible theory is that the invaders came from the Aegean but were not Greeks. The aboriginal inhabitants of the area were called "Pelagi" or Sea Peoples by the early Greeks. Could these be the Peleset? Most scholars believe that the Peleset are the Philistines of the Bible. They are also referred to as the

"last remnants of Caphtor" or Caphtorim. Since "Caphtor" is believed to be the Hebrew for Crete, an Aegean origin is suggested for at least one contingent of the Sea Peoples.

Wherever the Peoples of the Sea came from, it is clear that this was a time of turmoil in the Aegean. According to the Egyptian scribes, "The isles were restless, disturbed among themselves."

Presumably Egyptian intelligence operatives or diplomatic personnel kept Ramses informed of these developments. A dangerous situation was developing.

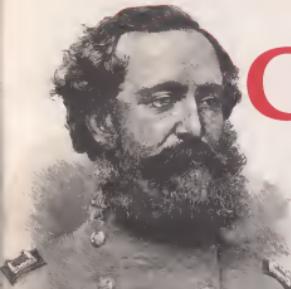
No land, including Hatti, Kode, Amor, Carchemish and Alashiya, could withstand the advancing peoples, said the scribes. It is implausible that the Sea Peoples could have overthrown Hatti (that is, the Hittite Empire, the capital of which was at Hattusas in central Turkey) or Carchemish, more than 100 miles from the sea. Most authorities believe that the Hittites were destroyed by a group of Indo-European invaders known as the Phrygians. By the same token, archeological finds indicate that "Alashiya" or Cyprus was overrun by Mycenaean Greeks and this is reinforced by the tale that Teucer, son of Ajax, founded a kingdom in Cyprus at about this time. Yet, from the Egyptian point of view, these peoples could all be part of a "confederation" and there is nothing implausible about the Sea Peoples hitting Kode (Cilicia) or Amor (Syria).

Indeed, archeologists have found tablets prepared by the king of Ugarit, a city-state in northern Syria, warning that an attack by the Sea Peoples was imminent. Before the tablets could be baked, the city was destroyed.

Although the scribes indicate that these countries were all "cut off at one

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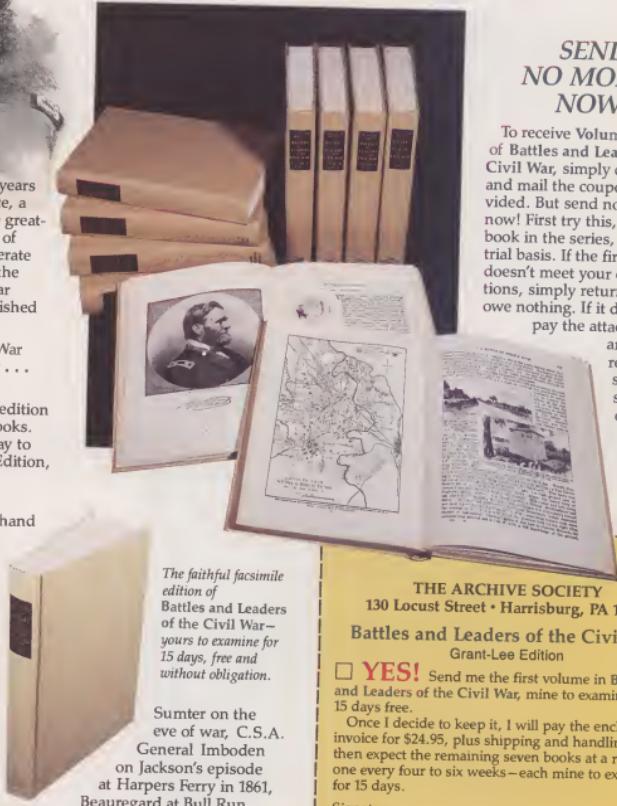
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time," it seems clear that the Egyptians had plenty of advance warning.

Ramses' defense analysts, familiar with the terrain of the Sinai desert on Egypt's eastern frontier, could feel confident that these waterless wastes would prove a difficult barrier for any invader. Moreover, the backbone of the Egyptian army was its chariot corps, which was quite formidable. It must have been apparent that the most dangerous threat was from the sea.

The Egyptians had already been building ships for more than 2,000 years. A river people, they may be credited with inventing the oar, a truly revolutionary device that made possible the propulsion and maneuver of large craft independent of the winds.

But Egyptian shipbuilders were handicapped by a lack of suitable wood. The native acacia and sycamore could not produce pieces of sufficient length for beams and keels. Only by using expensive imported lumber could they build ships suitable for use at sea.

Early ship construction by the Egyptians, as seen on the reliefs of Pharaoh Sahure (circa 2600 BC) and Queen Hetephesut (circa 1500 BC) progressed little over a span of 1200 years. Their seagoing vessels were constructed of short sections of wood reinforced by ropes circling the hull and running fore and aft. They lacked ribs, and even keels, and the rigging was clumsily set up, often with the mast too far forward to be of use other than with a following wind. Until the time of Ramses III, the mission and doctrine of Egyptian naval units was predominantly geared to a logistical role for campaigns in Syria.

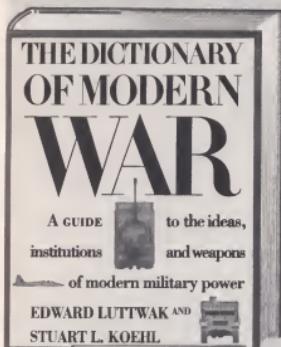
But the galleys used by Ramses III against the Sea Peoples represented dramatic improvements. Indeed, they apparently were the first ships purposefully designed for war.

Examination of the relief of these ships shows rigging that included braces, sheets and tacks. The sails were furled with braids, and at the mastheads there were fighting tops manned by slingers. The cumbersome lower yard of the earlier Egyptian ships was eliminated, and the position of the mast allowed some degree of sailing into the wind.

The most dramatic improvements, however, were to the hulls. These were built on a strong keel with, for the first time in Egyptian shipbuilding, ribs as well as strong through beams.

The strength of construction is shown by the abandonment of the heavy rope truss used to reinforce earlier vessels fore and aft. The rowers were protected by a high washboard, and any doubt about the warlike purpose of these craft was dispelled by the bronze-shod battering rams on their bows, fashioned in the form of

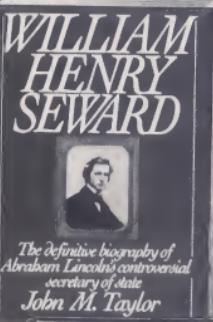
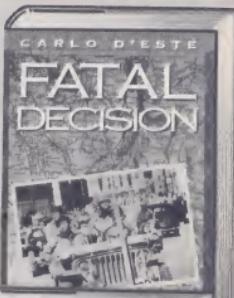
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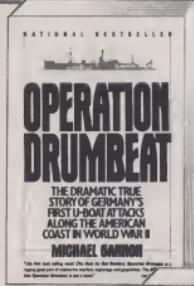
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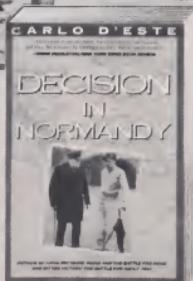
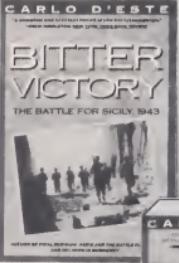


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a roaring lion with an Asiatic sailor writhing in its teeth.

The ships of the Sea Peoples had rigging which was identical with that of Ramses' ships. The hulls, however, were quite different. They had cutwaters at both bow and stern, which would probably have improved their sailing performance. These cutwaters were characteristic of Minoan ships, reinforcing the theory that a large contingent of the Sea Peoples came from Crete. They had curious birdlike ornaments on their stern and foreposts, but were not equipped with rams. They were never shown with oars and it is possible (but hardly likely) that they were not equipped with them.

Ramses' naval strategists were confronted with a difficult problem. If they sought out the enemy and fought him at sea, they would forfeit the advantage of support from their land forces and small craft. But the Nile emptied into the Mediterranean through seven channels, any one of which might provide an avenue of attack for an invader into the heart of Egypt. Ramses stated: "I organized my frontier in Zahi... I caused the Nile mouth to be prepared like a strong wall with warships, galleys and skiffs, equipped."

It is logical to believe that the "strong wall" was in actuality composed of light surface units supported by land forces and that Ramses' main battle fleet, with its modern war galleys, was concentrated near Memphis, at the head of the delta. According to the military scribes, "As they were coming forward toward Egypt, their hearts relying upon their hands, a net was prepared for them, to ensnare them."

But the Egyptians could not afford to play too long a waiting game. If the invaders secured a strongpoint on the coast they might be difficult to dislodge and might be reinforced. Moreover, the annual flooding of the Nile would greatly complicate the defense, because when the river overflowed its banks, shallow draft vessels could actually sail over the land of the delta.

The invaders would have been watched and exact intelligence of their operations would have reached Ramses continually. The stage was set for a sudden counterattack: "Now the northern countries... penetrated the channels of the Nile mouths... His Majesty is gone forth like a whirlwind against them."

The reliefs show the Sea Peoples' ships with their sails furled and no oars in operation. This suggests that they were at anchor when Ramses struck.

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' tale to Penelope's suitors was that he was from Crete and had taken part in a descent on Egypt. His men had begun looting and pillaging the land when they were sud-

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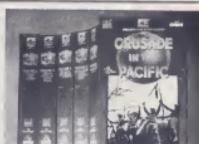
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denly attacked by the Egyptians and defeated. Perhaps this passage is an allusion to an actual event.

The Sea Peoples had round shields with handles (another indication that they were not Greeks—the Mycenaeans still used the "tower" shield, managed by a thong, at this time) and were armed with swords and spears.

Sweeping down the river with the current, Ramses' galleys struck the invading fleet suddenly. Each Egyptian warship had a strong contingent of archers on board and the invaders were at a hopeless disadvantage as the Egyptians rowed among them unleashing a hail of arrows.

The tops of the Egyptian warships were manned with slingers and, in addition to archers, each galley had marines equipped with long pikes and with grappling hooks. No ramming attacks are shown, but one of the invaders' ships has been overturned, if not by ramming then perhaps by use of the hooks.

The Egyptian marines are shown wearing scale armor and helmets that appear to have scale neckguards—far better equipped than ordinary Egyptian troops and again showing the extent of Ramses' preparations. His ships, "...were completely equipped both fore and aft with brave fighters carrying their weapons and infantry of all the pick of Egypt."

From the shore, companies of Egyptian archers are depicted shooting at the invaders' fleet, in coordination with the attack by Ramses' naval units. "Those that entered into the Nile mouths were caught, fallen into the midst of it, pinned in their places, butchered, and their bodies hacked up."

The Egyptian marines are shown rescuing Sea People from the water and taking them captive, using wooden handcuffs to secure the prisoners. These, we are told by Ramses, were "branded and made into slaves stamped with my name."

All this was recorded on the walls of the temple at Medinet Habu, to give the enemies of Egypt "a lesson for a million generations."

The sequel to the battle was that Ramses III allowed one group of the Sea Peoples, the Peleset, to settle in southern Palestine (indeed, Palestine is named for them). These are the Philistines of the Bible and, while holding the local inhabitants in subjugation for more than 100 years, they may have served as a sort of buffer state for Egypt. Another group, the Tish, may have emigrated to Italy, to surface later in history as the Etruscans.

Whatever the subsequent wanderings of the Peoples of the Sea, they were never again a threat to Egypt. So it seems that the first known naval battle in history was also one of the most decisive. □



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American-built M3A3 light tanks, manned by Chinese crews, move up during a counterattack against the Japanese in 1944. Assisting the Chinese effort at that time was a U.S. Army contingent that included a great number of Chinese-American personnel.



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### Interview by William F. Wu

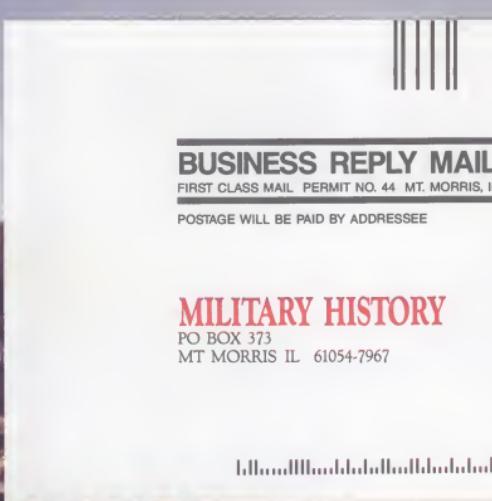
In early 1944, north Burma was a strategic wedge held by the Japanese, with India to the west and the Nationalist Chinese to the east, in Yunnan, the southwestern province of China. The Japanese could threaten British operations in India and prevent supplies from moving overland from India to the Chinese interior, where the Chinese, headquartered in Chongqing (Chungking), were resisting the Japanese on the East China front.

American Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, commander in chief of the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater, also wanted to use the remote airstrip at Myitkyina, Burma, as a base for American operations, if he could take it from the Japanese. This obscure corner of the world was called "China's back door."

For now, supplies had to be flown from India over "the Hump" of the Himalayas at great expense through treacherous weather. The U.S. Army and the Nationalist Chinese were building the Burma Road from the city of Kunming in Yunnan westward through the jungle toward Burma, but the overland route from India was not yet completed.

The U.S. Army sent units to train and support two Nationalist Chinese military forces in this area. One, the Chinese Expeditionary Force (C-Force), was based in Assam, India. The other was the Yunnan Expeditionary Force (Y-Force), stationed in Kunming. It was made up of 11 Nationalist Chinese Army divisions trained and supplied by the U.S.

American-built M3A3 light tanks, manned by Chinese crews, move up during a counterattack against the Japanese in 1944. Assisting the Chinese effort at that time was a U.S. Army contingent that included a great number of Chinese-American personnel.



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# SURGERY IN THE FIELD

For a Chinese-American doctor, following the Y-Force in the CBI theater meant slogging the toughest terrain, setting up field hospitals and operating on patients within earshot of combat.

*Interview by William F. Wu*

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TOP: A Japanese battle flag captured by General Tsai Zhang after annihilating a Japanese regiment. Tsai attributed his victory to the hemorrhoid operation performed on him by William Q. Wu, declaring, "You made me a soldier again." ABOVE: Captain Wu proudly shows off the enemy flag presented to him by General Tsai, for his indirect contribution toward its capture.

Army. The commanding officer (CO) of Y-Force was Brig. Gen. Frank Dorn, an assistant to Stilwell.

One component of the U.S. Army support in Y-Force was the 22nd Field Hospital. More than half of the officers in it were Chinese-American medical and dental officers; about half the enlisted men were also Chinese-Americans. It was brought up to full strength by Americans of European descent. At China's back door, the 22nd Field Hospital moved with Y-Force across the Salween River toward Burma on April 15, 1944.

Dr. William Q. Wu, now an internationally respected neurosurgeon in Kansas City, Mo., was a surgical resident at Bethesda Hospital in Cincinnati when America entered World War II. He had emigrated from China at the age of 11 without his parents and had grown up in the Chinatown of Philadelphia in the back of an uncle's laundry. In 1942, he volunteered for the U.S. Army, even though immigrants from China were prevented by law from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. The young doctor entered the Army as a first lieutenant and was discharged a major. Even now, he still has his Bronze Star, his campaign ribbon with a battle star for Tengchung, and his Medical Corps lapel insignia, the caduceus.

On behalf of *Military History Magazine*, Dr. Wu's son, William F. Wu, has posed these questions of his father.

**Military History:** Since you weren't an American citizen, was there a problem entering the service?

**Wu:** I was liable for the draft as an enlisted man, but not as a doctor. The CO of a medical recruiting team said if I entered the service as an enlisted man, I could apply for citizenship after three months and then for a commission as an officer. I thought if I tried that, I'd get lost in the paperwork and stay an enlisted man. I didn't do it.

**MH:** So how did you finally enlist?

**Wu:** That summer (1942) I read in the *Journal of the AMA* (American Medical Association) that citizens of Allied countries who had medical training similar to that of Americans could apply for a commission in the Army. Since I was a graduate of the University of Michigan Medical School, I applied right away, in June. About a month after applying, I got a telegram addressed to "First Lt. William Q. Wu."

**MH:** Where did you report?

**Wu:** I had to report to Fort Lewis, Washington, by September 2. I had time to visit my girlfriend, Cecile, in Washington, D.C., first. She was a coordinator in the Army Map Service. Then I went to Seattle by train.

**MH:** Is this where you joined the 22nd Field Hospital?

**Wu:** No. After two or three months at Fort Lewis, I was ordered to the 22nd Field Hospital in Camp White, Oregon.

**MH:** This hospital was intended as a Chinese-American field hospital, wasn't it?

**Wu:** Among the officers, there were seven of us and five others, plus our CO, Lt. Col. Bob Johnston. About half the enlisted men were Chinese-Americans. I guess they didn't have enough of us for the whole hospital. Most of the Chinese-Americans were from the West Coast, especially the San Francisco Bay area.

**MH:** How long were you at Camp White?

**Wu:** Until the following spring. During that time, the U.S. Congress passed a law allowing Chinese and other immigrants in the U.S. Armed Services to become naturalized citizens. In March of 1943, I was granted American citizenship in Medford, Oregon. I had always been more American than Chinese, but now for the first time, I felt like I really belonged.

**MH:** You shipped overseas from Oregon?

**Wu:** Yes, the long way. We went by train to Fort Kilmer, New Jersey. Cecile came up to visit me. I was supposed to be back by midnight but I was late—the guard saw our emotional goodbye when she dropped me off. He just winked at me and let me in.



Chinese troops man an American-made 37mm anti-tank gun. Generally too weak for combat in Europe, the "peashooter" was quite adequate against Japanese armor and also proved useful for light artillery support against enemy bunkers and strongpoints.

**MH:** Where did you go when you left Fort Kilmer?

**Wu:** We boarded the *Mauritania*, a huge British passenger liner being used as a troop carrier. First we landed in Rio de Janeiro, then we wandered all over the South Atlantic evading German subs. Finally we went ashore at Capetown. The white South Africans yelled "Chink!" at us, even though we were all supposedly Allies.

**MH:** Did you stay there long?

**Wu:** No. We sailed to Bombay and then took a train across India to Assam, on the Burmese border. We spent three months there in medical service to C-Force. Then Colonel Johnston was ordered to take one of our three platoons over the Hump to Kunming. He chose me, two other officers and 20 or 50 enlisted men. He picked me because I spoke both Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese.

**MH:** How was the flight over the Hump?

**Wu:** Thrilling, awesome—and rough! On the Army maps Cecile had back in Washington, the Hump was full of blank spaces. If we went down, no one would even try to find us. We flew in and out of clouds constantly, coming face to face with snow-covered peaks all the time. Most of us got sick from the sudden banking and climbing, and some needed oxygen.

**MH:** What happened when you reached Kunming?

**Wu:** Over the next two weeks, the rest of the hospital joined us, since we were now part of Y-Force. Two doctors who could speak Mandarin were requested by the sick ward of a Chinese artillery unit, and Fred Jing and I went. Ten Chinese nurses were assigned to our unit to learn some English and some of our methods.

**MH:** This is one form of the support you were providing to the Chinese army?

**Wu:** Yes. Fred and I worked there every day for a long time. Our unit was learning to coordinate with a Chinese field hospital commanded by a Colonel Lo and set up in an old temple. We saw some of the worst illnesses of the war there. Patients had malaria, relapsing fever and dysentery. They were poorly nourished, with swollen abdomens and legs. Many had worms. Mortality was high because the Chinese lacked medicine. We finally managed to get drugs to treat malaria and relapsing fever after a lot of red tape, but we could do nothing about the typhus.

**MH:** That must have been frustrating.

**Wu:** We had some successes in our field hospital. I performed surgery on General Tsai Zhang, a division commander in the Chinese Fifty-third Army. He had fought the Japanese in Manchuria and his troops respected him. Prolapsed hemorrhoids had left him barely able to walk. Four days after the surgery, he returned to his unit, with some residual pain but walking normally. And I was promoted to captain in Kunming.

**MH:** The next action in this theater began when the Japanese moved on the British at Imphal, India, on the southwestern border of Burma. C-Force began to advance on Myitkyina from farther north. Y-Force was ordered to advance toward Myitkyina from the east at the same time. When did you start toward Burma?

**Wu:** In April 1944. We received orders to go to Baoshan, which was then the northern terminal of the Burma Road. General Dorn briefed us there. The 22nd Field Hospital would follow the Chinese Fifty-third Army, commanded by General Zhou Fucheng. We would be going on foot with a mule train carrying our supplies. To avoid Japanese planes, we would have to hike through the jungle.

**MH:** Did you leave right away?

**Wu:** Yes. We started marching up and down mountain slopes. We walked until it was too dark to see and finally stopped at some water holes. We boiled the water to have a form of instant coffee with our C-rations and slept in hammocks strung up with mosquito bars. On the second day of marching, we reached an old road that the local people said had been used by Marco Polo. It seemed old enough; the footing was terrible. The granite steps had been worn smooth and slippery, and the mules had a hard time with them. After three days, we got to the Salween River.

**MH:** When did you first see action?

**Wu:** Just as we reached the edge of the river, about dusk, shelling began all around us from over the mountains across the river. We were so accustomed to war movies that we just stood looking around to see where they were coming from, until someone yelled, "Get down, stupid!"

**MH:** And then what?

**Wu:** We all jumped for cover! But the shells were falling short and no one was hurt. It stopped about an hour later, at dark. We bivouacked along the river, and during the night the water rose and carried away some of our equipment. We were still very green.

**MH:** The Salween was the line of Japanese occupation into China from the Burmese border. So you met resistance right away?

**Wu:** Oh, yes. The next morning members of the American Advisory Command came back and told us that a fierce battle was raging not far away. The Chinese were holding their own, but their casualties would be coming in soon. They led us to a bridge about a mile downstream, where our field hospital split up into three platoons. Then we crossed this narrow, swinging, swaying bridge to reach the other side. Each platoon found a protected area in the hills to set up. By this time, the sound of the gunfire and artillery was very clear.

**MH:** When did the wounded start coming in?

**Wu:** In less than an hour. The first was a Chinese soldier who had had his left foot blown off and his right leg broken. We weren't set up for surgery and could only give him morphine and send him back to an evacuation hospital. It was frustrating, but we were able to care for the other wounded. They required preliminary cleansing and débridement of the wounds, and dressings. Then we sent them to Colonel Lo's hospital to our rear.

## TENGCHUNG AFTERMATH

The final taking of Tengchung by the Chinese Y-Force set in motion a chain of events that would bring to a head the longstanding rivalry between China's leader, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell, whom American President Franklin D. Roosevelt had recently placed in command of all Chinese forces in the field.

On August 26, 1944, 6,000 Japanese troops counterattacked at Lungling, south of Tengchung, pushing Y-Force back. The Japanese objective had been limited to regaining control of the old Burma Road, but Chiang feared that their offensive was aimed at Kunming, the Chinese terminus of the Hump airlift, and asked Stilwell to rush his battle-weary Chinese di-

visions at Myitkyina on a 90-mile jungle march to attack the Japanese rear and divert attention from their offensive. When Stilwell refused, Chiang threatened to pull Y-Force back to defend Kunming.

While those arguments went on, Y-Force was putting up such stiff resistance that the Japanese called off their offensive, ending the threat to Kunming. But the conflict between commanders had taken on a life of its own. Chiang publicly refused to accept Stilwell and, on October 18, Roosevelt acquiesced and ordered Stilwell's recall. Major General Albert C. Wedemeyer replaced Stilwell as Chiang's chief of staff and commander of U.S. forces in China.

Jon Guttman

**MH:** What happened next?

**Wu:** This went on for two days, then the Japanese withdrew. The experience gave us a lot of confidence. We had done the job a field hospital is expected to do.

**MH:** You moved forward then?

**Wu:** Yes, we advanced into a big, beautiful valley where the American Advisory HQ [headquarters] was set up. Colonel Lo told me that the Japanese were regrouping behind Snow Mountain up ahead. After several days, we were ordered to pack up our mules and march to the base of Snow Mountain. The American HQ stayed where it was.

**MH:** What happened at Snow Mountain?

**Wu:** First, we returned the mules to the Chinese army. We had to carry hospital equipment with our personal gear up the mountain ourselves. Since this was the rainy season, gullies of water were running down the mountainside. We went up one platoon at a time. The first two would leave men posted to tell the following platoon what to expect ahead. My platoon, led by Captain Kirk Swan, went last. We started late in the day, six hours after the first platoon left. We were climbing with heavy gear in constant rain and knee-deep mud. It took four hours to reach our first post. They had a fire going and we heated C-rations in our helmets.

**MH:** Did you spend the night there?

**Wu:** No. We were under orders to reach the top, but it was dark by the time we reached the second post, at the timber line. We put up one tent and slung hammocks for the night and built fires. It was eerie because the Chinese division we were following hadn't been heard from—no gunfire or anything.

**MH:** That must have been unnerving.

**Wu:** The next morning our mood was better. Some of us cut chopsticks from the jungle bamboo. At midday, we were still short of the peak, and suddenly Chinese soldiers began streaming back down past us. I stopped one of their ordnance officers, who told me that the Japanese had stalled the advance over the top, and the Chinese were ordered to try a flanking maneuver farther down. We set up a tent and a fire and gave shots of morphine to the walking wounded who needed it. It was all we could do.

**MH:** Did you go back with them?

**Wu:** No. We were cut off from the rest of our hospital and all American personnel, but our orders were to go to the peak. Our rations were short, and if all the Chinese came down past us, we'd be exposed to the Japanese. We had been told earlier that supplies would be airdropped to us, but they never arrived.

Later we found out that because we were over the cloud line and out of sight, the pilots had dropped them behind the Japanese by mistake.

**MH:** So what did you do?

**Wu:** Captain Swan told our Sergeant Haas and me to go back down for orders. We spent all day sliding down the muddy trail. Our platoon was down to D-rations, thick bars of chocolate. We found our other two platoons, but they didn't know what to do, either. They gave us rations and coffee. At about 6:30 p.m., we reached a Colonel Stoddard at the American Advisory HQ in the valley. We actually fell to the ground in front of him. He let us report while we ate ham, eggs and rice. He said the Chinese troops still above us would advance over the peak now, since the flanking maneuver had been successful and the Japanese were withdrawing again. He let us stay



Chinese troops—one of whom mans a mine detector—liberate a ruined town along the Burma Road. The ever-tenacious Japanese inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese, while the Allied medics had to cope with unreliable logistics and supply shortages.

there two days to recuperate and gave us a cow they had bought from a local Chinese farmer to take up with us.

**MH:** A cow?

**Wu:** Instead of rations. The trip back up was even worse than the first time. The weather was just as bad and the cow didn't want to go. The higher we got, the less grass there was for it. We had to fight the weather, the terrain—and the cow. We spent two nights with each of our other platoons, and by that time, the animal was so scrawny, no one wanted it. Even at our platoon, slaughtering it was going to be a big job. Captain Swan told us to take it on up to the division liaison headquarters on the peak, which he had located after we had left. Another 200 feet up, the cow fell over dead.

**MH:** After all that effort?

**Wu:** Yeah. I located the Chinese ordnance officer I had met before and had him put a guard on it. Then Sergeant Haas and I found Colonel Lo, who had his men slaughter it. I gave him a quarter of the meat. In the end, there were only three quarters of a helmet of meat for each American regiment. And it wasn't very good.

**MH:** When did you move out?

**Wu:** Two days later. Meanwhile, we slept fully clothed, even in our trench coats, with everything soaked through. When I got into my sleeping bag and hammock, water squirted out everywhere. I developed a skin infection in my foot that I had for 20 years. So, we were glad to get down out of the clouds. It took all day to reach the next valley, which was warm and dry. Then we began marching from one village to another. The villagers were afraid of us, after the way the Japanese had treated them. We set up our field hospital about a mile from Colonel Lo's and worked together there for about a month.

Slowly, the Chinese-Americans in our hospital made overtures to the villagers and won them over. We could barter or buy eggs, chickens and pork.

**MH:** You still had plenty of wounded to attend after Snow Mountain?

**Wu:** Yes. And an enlisted man saw that we seemed to have a new Chinese-American with us. The newcomer never spoke but he was always first in the chow line. He turned out to be a Japanese soldier and couldn't speak English or Chinese. He had been caught behind our lines. When we arrived, he stole a GI uniform and bluffed his way into camp three times a day for food. He got away with it for three weeks.

**MH:** It's June. Where did you go next?

**Wu:** To the walled city of Tengchung, to which the Japanese had fallen back. American P-40s and P-38s were bombing it. It was an old border town with ponds of waterlilies outside. I located a Buddhist nunnery where the nuns allowed us to set up. This time we had full surgical capabilities on three operating tables near the altar, with Colonel Lo's hospital nearby for the walking wounded. We took care not to scare the nuns, who were very timid. Meanwhile, when the Chinese began their assault, my first two patients were those with the first gunshot wounds to the head we received there. After that, I had the most experience with head wounds, and they sent them to me if possible. In a way, it was the beginning of my becoming a neurosurgeon, which I specialized in after the war. At the time, though, Captain Swan kept saying, "Massachusetts General was never like this," and yet everyone was very professional. We matured quickly as surgeons—and got more somber every day. War injuries didn't require much diagnosis.



An American convoy bound for Kweryang ascends the famous 21 curves at Annan. Control of the mountainous roads was of vital importance to both sides.

MH: What was happening at Tengchung?

Wu: It was hit with bombs, tunnels and mines, and ground assault. It seemed to hold out a long time. Rainy season favored the Japanese defenders. Some days brought in more casualties than others.

MH: What did you do on the light days?

Wu: Our enlisted Chinese-Americans won over these local villagers, too. I told Captain Swan that our men craved female companionship and that the villagers liked them. He granted them later hours so they could visit the village. One evening they invited me along and I was surprised to see how liberal the parents of the village girls were toward our men. Some invited them to stay overnight with their daughters. One father told me that the Japanese had demanded that 20 teenage girls be sent into Tengchung every two weeks for sex. Otherwise the entire village would be massacred. The girls had decided to offer themselves willingly to the Americans out of gratitude. This was an open invitation to our unit, but I told our men to keep it down to a few close friends. I was afraid it would get out of hand.

MH: How was Tengchung taken?

Wu: Slowly, by infantry assault through holes in the walls. Its fall was imminent but the Japanese still held out in part of the city when we were relieved by another field hospital and ordered back to Baoshan. The return march went by another route so we didn't have to climb Snow Mountain again.

It took about a week. One night, we stopped at a division command post of the Fifty-third Army. Their CO turned out to be General Tsai, who came out to welcome us. When he saw me, he forgot all about military protocol and gave me a big hug. Then he took me to his private tent for tea.

MH: What did he want?

Wu: Since he had recovered from his hemorrhoid surgery, his division had fought very well. He pulled out a Japanese battle flag with blood stains on it and gave it to me as a memento. He said: "You made me a soldier again. I even led my men into battle and annihilated a Japanese regiment. We may or may not meet again, but I'll never forget you." I still have the flag.

MH: Did you have any trouble on the return march?

Wu: We lost a man to complications from typhus. We set up the hospital outside Baoshan, but there were no casualties now. Then, in the spring of 1945, the 22nd Field Hospital was reorganized with new personnel. Most of the officers were reassigned.

MH: Where did you go?

Wu: I went to Station Hospital in Chongqing, next to CBI HQ. It was a new life there. We had only 35 beds, mostly for top brass and diplomats. I gave rabies shots to the son of a Russian diplomat, operated on a Chinese admiral's hemorrhoid, and gave vitamin B-12 shots to a staffer at the American Embassy. At a distance, I saw General Stilwell and his successor, Maj. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, and the Chinese Communist leader, Chou En-lai. The quarters and food were excellent; breakfast was bacon, eggs, pancakes and juices, just

like home. I was promoted to major there. But caring for the wounded in battle had been much more satisfying.

MH: Where were you when the war ended?

Wu: I got a 45-day leave to go Stateside in late July. I called Cecile, who was with the State Department in San Francisco, where the United Nations was organizing. My cable flashed on the U.N. teletype screen and my marriage proposal was visible to every delegation in the U.N. Then, we were in the air when the A-bombs were dropped on Japan. I met Cecile in Washington and we got married a week later. I was transferred to Fort Meade, Maryland, and my discharge soon was being processed.

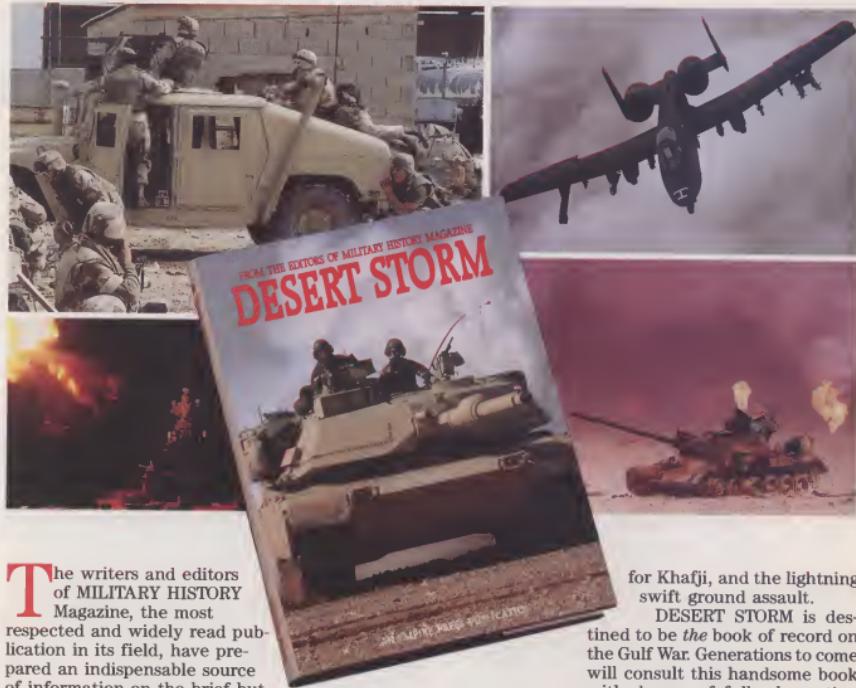
MH: As you look back over 45 years, what are your final thoughts on your experiences in the war?

Wu: Prejudice toward the Chinese was still present at home, but in our mixed field hospital, it did not exist. We found that to survive, we all needed each other. I was proud to serve in Uncle Sam's Army as a new citizen and happy to have helped defeat China's enemy, the Japanese. □

Interviewer William F. Wu has a longtime interest in military history and has written *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940* (Archon Books, 1982). Suggested Readings: Merrill's Marauders, by Charlton Ogburn; Claire Chennault, by Martha Byrd; and *Confusion Beyond Imagination*, by William Boyd Sinclair.

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# SURVIVAL OF THE STRONG

That Otto had gathered so many contentious German duchies together under his command was an accomplishment in itself, but would it be enough to stop the rampaging Magyar hordes? More than 10 hours of battle, head to head, would decide.

By Jon Guttman

**O**n August 9, 955, Augsburg was a city fighting for its life. Magyar invaders had denuded the countryside around the old Germanic city, pitched their tents and dug earthworks. Siege engines ground ever closer to the doomed city, pushed forward by Slavic captives whipped from behind by their Magyar masters.

The defenders tensely waited at the ramparts with little hope of fending off these murderous invaders from the east, well aware also that they could expect no mercy from them. This was the pattern that Europe had learned painfully over the past century.

The Magyar tribes that entered the Carpathian basin in 896 are generally believed to have originated along the River Ob, west of the central Ural Mountains, the general position of the most easterly (Ugrian) branch of the Finno-Ugric linguistic group. Originally hunters and fishermen, they settled down to farming and raising livestock in the valleys of the southwestern Urals from about 2000 BC, but changes in climate in the millennium that followed, combined with their taming of horses, pushed them back into the nomadic life. After intermittent movements north and south, the peoples now identified as Magyars broke away from other Ugrians sometime around 500 BC to lead their seminomadic existence in what is now Bashkir, north of the Caspian Sea between the middle Volga region and the southern Urals. Borrowing from neighboring peoples, such as the Alans, Persians and Turkic Bulgars, they synthesized a language, culture and social structure of their own.

The religion of the Magyars was animist in nature, with the horse a sacred animal and the *turul*—a predatory eagle—their





Vanquished Moravians offer symbolic barrels of earth and water to Árpád and his warrior chiefs in a detail from *The Magyar Conquest*, an epic painting of Hungary's legend by Miklós Munkácsy that presently hangs in a Hungarian Parliament in Budapest.



The Battle of Lechfeld was recognized early on as a pivotal event in both German and Hungarian history, and was treated accordingly. The illustration here, from a Hungarian text of 1488, typically shows the combatants in contemporary—anachronistic—armor.

totemic emblem. Shamans provided a bridge between the material and the spiritual world, with a mythical black shaman, representing winter, darkness and evil in perpetual and seasonal strife, and a white shaman representing spring, light and goodness (a folk theme that was later translated by Hungarian Christians into the still popular metaphor of St. George and the Dragon).

By 500 AD, the Magyars were dominated by a warrior class of horsemen whose effectiveness was enhanced by the use of light curved sabers (an Alan weapon) and stirrups (a Bulgar contribution), as well as the Magyar-designed saddle, which was lightweight and comfortable for both horse and rider. War booty and foreign slaves (especially Slavs, who commanded a high price in the Byzantine markets) became the staples of Magyar livelihood, although the seasonal and sporadic cultivation of land was never entirely abandoned.

The principal Magyar weapon was a composite bow of straighter design than those of other nomads of the steppes. For closer combat, the well-equipped Magyar carried a light spear, the curved saber and sometimes a mace. Shields were seldom used. Chieftains wore felt or leather lamellar protection in the style of the Scandinavians and eastern Slavs, and the aristocratic warrior elite possessed finely crafted metal armor.

From about 500 on, the Magyars were part of a tribal confederation called the Ten Arrows, or *Onogar*—from whence the later term “Hungary” originated—which was in turn subordinate to the Khazar kaganate. The Khazars were a Turkic people whose aristocracy maintained a precariously balanced neutrality between the neighboring Moslem and Byzantine empires, avoiding religious commitment to either power by converting to Judaism. Numerous individuals within the Magyar tribes also converted to Judaism under the Khazar influence. A somewhat smaller number also embraced Islam. Both “religions of the Book” were tolerated and their adherents accepted as equals by the predominant Magyar pagans.

After 800, the Khazar kaganate began to decline and the Magyars, under pressure from another fierce Turkic people, the Pechenegs, moved to a place they called *Etelköz* (land between the rivers) that lay between the lower Danube and Dniestr rivers.

In addition to religious influence on many within the tribe, the Khazars left their mark on the Magyar political structure. Such central power as existed among the tribal chiefs at that time was shared by three men: the *kende*, commander of the warriors; the *gyula*, chief military commander; and the *hárka*, who saw to civil administration and judicial affairs. In 895, the Magyars’ *hárka* was a man named Tétény, while Kurszán was the *kende* and Árpád the *gyula*.

In that year, with Árpád his son Levente on campaign against the Bulgars at the head of most of the Magyar army, the Pechenegs—possibly at the invitation of the Bulgars—stormed across the River Don to attack the inadequately protected Magyar settlements and slaughtered great numbers of Magyar women and children. The survivors were driven west, taking refuge in the Transylvanian mountains.

Seeking a stronger alliance among the Magyar tribes, Árpád called upon the seven greatest chieftains, or *hadnagyok*, to cut their wrists, gather their blood in a helmet and drink from it. He then led his people farther west in search of a more secure homeland.

Astounding though it would later seem in retrospect, the Magyar invasion of Europe then came by invitation. Following the death of Charlemagne in 814, his united empire broke up. The most fragmentation occurred among the duchies of Germany. The political scene was dominated by counts and margraves and their vassals and *militiae*—contentious noblemen.

The appearance of the Magyars only served to encourage that state of affairs. In 892 Arnulf, king of the western Carolingian territories, broke down his own territory’s great defensive earthworks to enlist the Magyars’ aid against Duke Sviatopluk of Moravia. He got more than he bargained for.

Arpád led his powerful force into the Carpathian basin in a horse-borne blitzkrieg that the Magyars later came to call "The Conquest." Between 896 and 906, they drove the Bulgars out of the Great Plain and Transylvania, drove the Franks from Transdanubia and destroyed the Kingdom of Moravia. When Arnulf died, his own people found themselves fair game for Magyar raids as well.

Not since the sweeps by Attila's Huns in the 5th century had Europe faced invaders comparable to the Magyars. In fact, the speed and range of their raids surpassed even those of the Hunnic invaders. Not only superb horsemen, the Magyars displayed remarkable endurance, matched by that of their horses (enhanced by the practice of riding with spare mounts).

In 899 AD, 5,000 Magyars swept into the Po Valley, driving as far west as Pavia. Berengar I, the Lombard emperor of Northern Italy, raised an army of 15,000 men to confront the barbarians, who retreated before his larger force. After mauling Berengar's vanguard when it caught up with them at Verona, the Magyars resumed their flight across the River Brenta and camped on its far bank as the main Lombard force overtook them.

The Magyars offered to give up their booty, their arms and their horses if Berengar would grant them safe conduct to leave Italy, but he contemptuously rejected the offer. Left with nothing to lose but their lives, the Magyars reaffirmed their warriors' creed—"To fall fighting like men is not to die, but to live"—and suddenly took the offensive. The overconfident Lombards were caught while resting and eating when the Magyars charged across the river. After easily running down those who tried to flee the rout, the Magyars left Italy and returned to their newly claimed homeland in triumph.

In 904 AD, Kurszán was invited to a peace feast by the Bavarians, who then murdered him and his retinue. Declaring his death a form of divine punishment in accordance with Magyar pagan traditions, Arpád assumed the power of *kende* as well as *gyula*. Then, in 907, Arpád dispatched an army to avenge Kurszán's death.

Ludwig the Child, the 14-year-old son of Arnulf, organized his Bavarian forces into three divisions and set forth to meet the Magyars near the city of Augsburg. Near daybreak, Arpád's men struck the Bavarian camp from all sides. Many who survived the barrage of arrows struggled into their protective mail as they stumbled from their tents, only to have their heads split by Magyar sabers. For about seven hours, however, Ludwig's third division fought the Magyars to a stalemate. When the Magyar cavalry finally broke into disorderly "retreat," Ludwig bravely—but, as it turned out, unwisely—led his men after the retreating enemy, only to fall into a waiting ambush. Ludwig narrowly escaped the slaughter.

Arpád died later in 907, but not before he had seen the complete occupation of the lands from Transylvania to the old Roman province of Pannonia. From that geographic base, the depredations of the Magyars in Europe really began in earnest. Before the year was out, they would cross the Rhine River, and then move south into Provence in an orgy of looting and destruction.

The Magyar terror was not without purpose. The women they carried off in their raids were not casual rape victims but intended brides, meant to replace those slaughtered by the Pechenegs and thus to help restore the population and family units in the seminomadic settlements the Hungarians established. The area around their base of operations was to be laid waste in order to establish a protective no man's land around it. The Magyars had no territorial ambitions beyond the buffer zone, but they mounted periodic raids to keep the Germans too weak to threaten their newly won homeland.

Villages and monasteries burned while clerics wondered what their lords were doing about the new scourge from the east. The majority of the feuding nobles in fact were paying tribute to the Magyars, vying to have their own realms spared and attempting to persuade the Magyars to ravage the lands of their rivals. To raise this extortion money, the nobles increased the taxes on their subjects, keeping a percentage for themselves. In 910, King Ludwig himself agreed to pay a heavy tribute to the Magyars. After his death the next year at the age of 18, his successor, Conrad I, was forced to do the same.

After the death of King Conrad in 918, Henry of Saxony was elected to succeed him. He was hawking for birds when he was informed of his election and was known thereafter as Henry the Fowler.

The Magyars subjected Henry to careful scrutiny, for the election of a new king tended to void the tribute-paying agree-

## PAINFUL GROWTH FOR HUNGARY

Unlike other eastern invaders, the Hungarians were not driven back into the steppes of Central Asia by their defeat at Lechfeld. Instead, they embarked on a difficult transition into a nation that required them to come to terms with Western European political and religious conventions. Some aspects of the transition virtually amounted to a civil war.

Taking the reins of government, Taksony, Arpád's grandson, sought our contacts with the west. Prince Géza, Taksony's successor after 972, invited a contingent of missionaries, headed by King Otto's brother, Bruno of Sankt Gallen, into Hungary and was himself baptized, although he did not abandon the traditional pagan gods. Géza's son, Vajk, was rechristened as Stephen (István) and succeeded him in 997.

Stephen took his conversion to Western Christianity more seriously than did his father and was also more earnest in completely reforming the Hungarian political structure. The old tribes were abolished, power was centralized at the town of Estergom (50 miles north of present-day Budapest) and 45 new counties, or *megyék*, were created, administered by royal officials (*ispán* and *füöispán*) responsible to Stephen, rather than to the local barons.

Italian, German and Bohemian monks were imported in a determined effort to convert the Hungarians to

Western Christianity. Paganism was discouraged and later outlawed. As "people of the Book," the Jews were eventually permitted to keep their faith, but their *hadnagyok*—and even those of the Eastern Christian faith—had to give up their noble status if they were to fit into the prevalent European order.

Many of the chieftains, pagan, Jewish and Greek Orthodox, bitterly resisted Stephen's reforms, but he managed to ruthlessly crush all their rebellions. In 996, Stephen had married Gisella, daughter of Duke Henry II of Bavaria—as one result, Bavarian knights and men-at-arms bolstered his forces in the course of his campaigns. The greatest factor in Stephen's success was his strategy of systematically dealing with the rebellious chieftains one by one, before they could unite against him. He was also aided by the ironic fact that the old class of chieftains was still seriously depleted in numbers, as a result of the slaughter at Lechfeld nearly half a century earlier.

On December 25, 1000, Stephen's stern measures bore fruit as he was crowned king by Pope Sylvester II. Hungary was declared an apostolic state, and over the next few centuries it would emerge from under the German shadow to become one of the most powerful nations in Central Europe.

J.G.



In contrast to the romanticized Hungarian image shown on page 34-35, this Western European depiction of a typical Magyar exaggerates their wanton bestiality—while ignoring the aid from Western lords that helped make their long-range depredations possible.

ment of his predecessor. During an encounter in 924, Henry managed to capture a Magyar chieftain, but magnanimously released his captive in return for immunity from further Magyar raids in Saxony for nine years. Henry agreed to continue paying tribute over those nine years, but made use of the time he quite literally had bought to strengthen his hand for the future, by rebuilding border fortifications in Saxony and Thuringia and levying all male subjects above the age of 13 into a strong army, or *exercitus*.

A noteworthy feature of Henry's new Saxon army was its greater reliance on cavalry than before. Horse breeding was encouraged in order to enlarge the mounted element, whose equestrian skills were perfected through mock combat games—an idea revived from the days of Charlemagne, and the fore-runner of the medieval tournament. Through such means, the Saxons developed a new elite, the heavily mailed cavalryman or *miles armatus*, from whom would evolve the medieval knight.

In 933 AD, Henry's rearmament program could no longer be ignored. The Magyars decided that a show of force was in order to keep Henry in his place, and they advanced into Saxony, slaughtering men and enslaving women and children as they went. Although ill at the time, Henry mobilized his *exercitus*, reinforced with cavalry from Bavaria and Franconia, to confront the invaders on March 15 at Riade on the Saale River, a few miles south of Merseburg.

Before the forces clashed, the Saxons loudly sang the *Kyrie eleison*, "Lord have mercy upon us," which the Magyars coun-

tered with an awesome battle chant. Henry then led his infantry and peasant light cavalry forward in an orderly formation. When the Magyars advanced, they found themselves suddenly under attack by Henry's armored cavalry, which had been held in concealment up to that moment. As the Germans charged, the Magyars loosed a shower of arrows, but this time the knights, anticipating the volley, raised their shields in unison to deflect it, and then galloped full tilt into the enemy before they could fire another. Awed by these new, more disciplined tactics, the Magyars broke and retreated—their first real setback since the Conquest.

In 936, Henry the Fowler died, but he had already arranged for the election of Otto, his eldest son by his second wife, to succeed him. Henry's faith in his red-haired son's ability to carry on where he had left off would prove to be thoroughly justified.

From the moment of his coronation at Aix-la-Chapelle, Otto was forced to prove that his qualifications to rule the German duchies were more than hereditary. In 936, 939 and 941, he had to put down rebellions, the latter two involving his brother Henry. Otto emerged victorious from all these challenges, strengthening his power by replacing the defeated rebel dukes with loyal members of his own family. Of the latter, the most able was his younger brother, Bruno of Sankt Gallen, who served as archchaplain, later chancellor and, after 953, as archbishop of Cologne as well as Duke of Lorraine.



After a feigned retreat failed to break up Otto's disciplined formations, the Magyars learned the folly of accepting battle on the wrong side of a river as the Germans drove them to the banks of the Lech. Many drowned trying to escape to the eastern bank.

Otto's ambitions in the east gave the Magyars ample cause for concern. In 937, he founded a new monastery at the eastern location of Magdeburg. He later established bishoprics at Havelburg and Brandenburg. He lent military support to the enterprises of fellow Germans against the Slavs, and at the same time promoted the expansion of German settlers into their lands—the first serious precedent for the “Drang nach Osten” (compulsion toward the East) that would affect German-Slavic relations for a millennium to come. From 950 on, Otto also began encroaching into northern territories at the expense of the Bohemians.

In 951, Otto followed the path of the Magyars into Italy, with results as different as the intentions. His invasion was in response to an appeal from the Burgundian Princess Adelaide, widow of King Lothair II of Lombardy, who had been imprisoned by the ambitious King Berengar II of Ivrea. Otto defeated Berengar, freed Adelaide and, since his own queen, Editha, had died early in his reign, he proposed marriage to the newly liberated princess. From Adelaide's standpoint, the handsome and energetic young Saxon king had literally been a savior in shining armor, so her acceptance of his troth was a foregone conclusion.

No sooner were the two wed, however, than Otto faced another rebellion among his German vassals. By 954, he had subdued the rebels and then turned his attention to the Magyars. He recognized that their raids had only exacerbated the rivalries among the German duchies, but

by rallying the contentious nobles against the foreign enemy, Otto hoped to lay the groundwork for a reunited German state.

Meanwhile, Bulcsú, the Magyar *harka*, and Lél, the military *gyula*, were determined to reverse the setback suffered against Henry the Fowler at Riade—and to negate the growing threat posed by his successor. Around 925, the Magyars had forged an alliance with Hugh of Provence, king of Italy, and in 942 Hugh called upon them to assist him against his Italian rivals and against the Moslem caliphate of Cordoba, which was threatening Provence's western borders. The most ambitious Magyar raid in years occurred in 947, striking into Italy as far south as Apulia. In 948, Bulcsú went to Byzantium and was baptized a Christian. By so doing, he established friendly enough relations with the Byzantine Empire to secure the southern Hungarian borders.

In 954, Lél led a lightning raid through Bavaria and, aided and abetted by a safe passage provided by Hugh through Provence, struck into France as far as Aquitaine. Catching the Germans in the midst of civil conflicts, the Magyars again found themselves in demand by the feuding German factions, but this time Lél would not be diverted from his intention of indiscriminately punishing them all. His doing so only strengthened the hand of Otto, who marched into Bavaria at the head of what now appeared to be a liberating army. Otto's and Lél's forces missed each other and the Magyars returned home to prepare for a return engagement.



In Bavarian arist Michael Echter's *Ungarnschlacht am Lechfeld*, Conrad, Duke of Franconia, dies amid the victory he helped to make possible. But it was King Otto's ruthlessly relentless follow-up that made the Magyar defeat at Lechfeld decisive.

Otto now was left in an ideal position to persuade the various German kings to set aside their differences and unite under him against the common enemy. Among those whom Otto skillfully won over to his side was Conrad, Duke of Franconia, who had taken part in an earlier revolt and forfeited his duchy as punishment. As one of the king's chief lieutenants in the campaign to come, Conrad's loyalty and valor would prove invaluable.

In the summer of 955 AD, the Magyars returned in the greatest numbers seen in Central Europe in many years, seemingly determined to impose once and for all their right to roam unrestricted throughout Europe. On August 8, they invested Augsburg, site of their previous victory over King Ludwig, and this time they clearly intended to make a fearful example of the city itself. Up until that time, the Magyars had not been known to assault fortified places. Sometimes they would impose a blockade, but more often they would limit their raiding to targets that could be overrun and sacked quickly. At Augsburg, however, they came prepared, equipped and determined to scale or breach the walls.

After one day, however, the siege operations suddenly stopped. A rebel Bavarian nobleman had arrived at the Magyar camp with word that Otto's army was fast approaching. Calling together their raiding parties by means of smoke signals, the Magyars eagerly prepared for the battle that would remove the Saxon thorn from their side. Not only Lél, the military commander, but Bulcsú, the civil administrator, rode at the head of their men, both keen for a place in Magyar folk sagas for their part in this important victory.

Otto's host encamped near the River Lech, a tributary of the Danube. With the addition of Slavic auxiliaries and warriors who had slipped out of Augsburg, his overall forces probably came to 10,000 men. The Magyars' numbers are believed to have been greater.

That night, a fast was ordered among the Christians to prepare them spiritually for the battle to come, but many probably were too tense to eat in any case.

The next morning, all the German lords swore mutual allegiance. They celebrated Mass and then advanced with lances and standards held high, in a loose column of eight groups or "legions," distinguished by nationality. Three Bavarian legions made up the vanguard, followed by a war band of Franconians. Behind them, Otto's Saxons rode in formation beneath the banner of St. Michael, vanquisher of the Devil. Two legions of Swabians followed Otto's unit, and a Bohemian legion constituted the rear guard. Otto carefully chose broken terrain over which to move his force forward, in order to frustrate any mass charges by the Magyars before he could deploy his legions into line for a cavalry rush of his own.

As they advanced, however, the Germans failed to notice a contingent of Magyars moving rapidly along their flank on the other side of the river. Those raiders crossed the river and, even as Otto began to engage the main Hungarian force, they fell upon his rear guard and his army's baggage train.

Under a hail of arrows and a fearsome onslaught of howling Magyars, the Bohemian and Swabian rear guard faltered, then broke. Their panicky flight caused the Franconian legion also to begin to disintegrate. Otto's position became critical, but a failure to coordinate their effort now cost the Hungarians their chance to encircle and annihilate the Germans. Most significant, instead of following up their success, the Magyars of the flanking group contented themselves with looting the German baggage train.

Otto, on the other hand, continued to demonstrate his mastery of the diverse kingdoms and duchies under his command. To protect his threatened rear, he dispatched Conrad, who succeeded in rallying the remaining Franconians and leading a counterattack that caught the Magyars in the act of retreating with their booty. They were hastened on their way, freeing many German prisoners in the process. The crisis averted, the focus of battle now shifted completely to the front, where Otto redeployed his column into a battle line and, charging in good order, collided head-on with the swarms of howling Magyar horsemen.

Above the din of the fighting, Otto is said to have shouted: "They surpass us, I know, in numbers, but neither in weapons nor in courage. We know also that they are quite without the help of God, which is of the greatest comfort to us." Whether or not anyone heard (or exactly said!) those encouraging words, the Germans slowly began to gain the advantage while the sturdiest warriors of each side battled on in the summer heat. Reaching a state of near exhaustion, Conrad, hero of the battle, momentarily loosened the mail around his helmet—and an instant later fell choking to the ground, his throat pierced by a Magyar arrow.

By then, however, even the mightiest Magyar warriors were falling back. The Germans had won the day, but only after taking heavy losses during 10 hours of some of the most ferocious fighting that Central Europe had witnessed in centuries. Realizing that his victory and the unity that had made it possible represented an opportunity that might never come again, King Otto resolved not to quit now.

Lél ordered his cavalry to stage a feigned flight, but Otto, like his father at Riade, was not about to let that old ruse break up his formations. Urging his weary men forward, Otto relentlessly kept up the pressure. Most of those Magyars who gamely fought on were the bravest and best-armed of the *hadnagok*; as they were cut down, the Hungarian retreat—now real, not feigned—degenerated into a general rout.

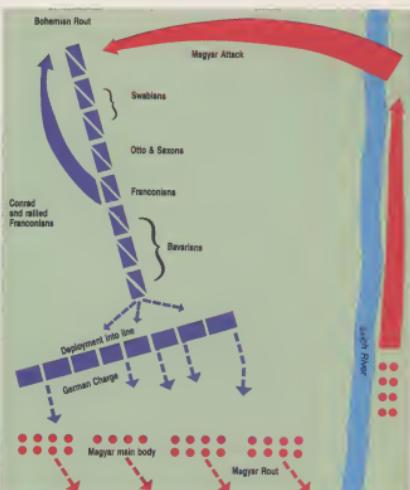
Many Magyars leaped into the River Lech, only to drown along the opposite bank when the foliage that lined it collapsed under their weight. Others hid in outlying villages, only to be burned out or cremated inside by the Germans. The stunned survivors who managed to get to the eastern bank of the Lech made their way across what is now Austria, across the Leitha River. Otto did not pursue them, correctly judging that another, even larger Magyar army had remained behind to guard the homeland.

Instead, Otto turned his attention to those invaders still trapped on the west side of the Lech. Over the next two days, the Germans hunted down and slaughtered as many Magyars as they could, in a ruthless follow-up that was more decisive than their victory itself. Lél and Bulcsú were among those captured, and a Hungarian legend claims that Lél, when brought before Otto, struck him down with the golden clarion that he still held, killing the Saxon king before he, himself, was executed. The fact upon which this fiction is based remains obscure. Whatever gesture of defiance was shown by Lél, Otto certainly lived to have the satisfaction of seeing him hang, along with Bulcsú and hundreds of Magyar *hadnagok*.

Many of the Augsburgers also fell victim to the German army's orgy of destruction, which was comparable to any they had known from the Magyars. Still, in one dramatic battle, the barbarian menace from the east had been eliminated. Lechfeld's consequences, however, were to be even more far-reaching for both sides.

Otto was congratulated for his great victory by the Byzantine emperor, who bestowed upon him the title of "emperor." As with his other claims, Otto made that more than a hollow title. In 961, he was again summoned to Italy, this time by Pope John XII. In February 962, he arrived in Rome and was crowned emperor for his support, at which point he issued a decree of his own, the *Privilegium Ottonianum*, which linked papacy and empire and reconfirmed the temporal power of the popes that had first been confirmed by Charlemagne. In this case, however, the popes would be fidalgo vassals to the emperor.

The next year, John XII found out how seriously the decree was to be taken when he showed disloyalty to Otto—and was promptly deposed and replaced by Otto's own candidate, Leo VIII. After Leo's death in 965, Otto had to march into Italy a third time, overpowering Roman opposition to install another pope, John XIII, in 966.



After Conrad, Duke of Franconia, secured Otto's rear—denying the Magyars a golden opportunity for victory—the Battle of Lechfeld was decided in a direct, head-on confrontation.

On May 7, 973, Otto I died; he was buried at the cathedral in his beloved city of Magdeburg. As the first Holy Roman Emperor, he had linked the German monarchy with Italy in a fateful rivalry for power that would continue for centuries. He had also laid the foundations of the German state, a precedent that would inspire generations of ambitious German kings and statesmen to follow.

More astonishing than the ascendancy of Otto the Great from his victory at Lechfeld was the recovery of the Magyars from their defeat. Forced to choose between adjusting to the ways of their western neighbors or following the succession of barbarians who had invaded Europe and wandered back into the east, the Hungarians uniquely chose the former course. Partly with German help—and largely thanks to the fact that the majority of Magyar warriors left after the Battle of Lechfeld belonged to the defending army left at home which was predominantly loyal to Árpád's clan—the heirs of the house of Árpád eventually established a permanent Hungarian state, modeled along the lines of Otto's empire. Ironically, later German attempts to invade or dominate Hungary would be soundly defeated by the strong kingdom in whose creation they had assisted.

While the Battle of Lechfeld was not very innovative militarily, its political consequences were more profound than its protagonists could ever have imagined. Most far-reaching were the national traditions established in the battle's aftermath—the unification of the German state and the phoenix-like ability of the Hungarian people to recover from a long succession of future crises and calamities. □

*Jon Guttman, a Magyar descendant himself, is a senior editor of Military History. For further reading: The Magyars: The Birth of a European Nation, by György Balázs and Károly Szélenyi (Budapest, Corvina Press, 1989); The Barbarians, by Tim Newark (Poole, Dorset, Blandford Press, 1985); The Age of Charlemagne, by David Nicolle (London, Osprey Publishing, 1984).*



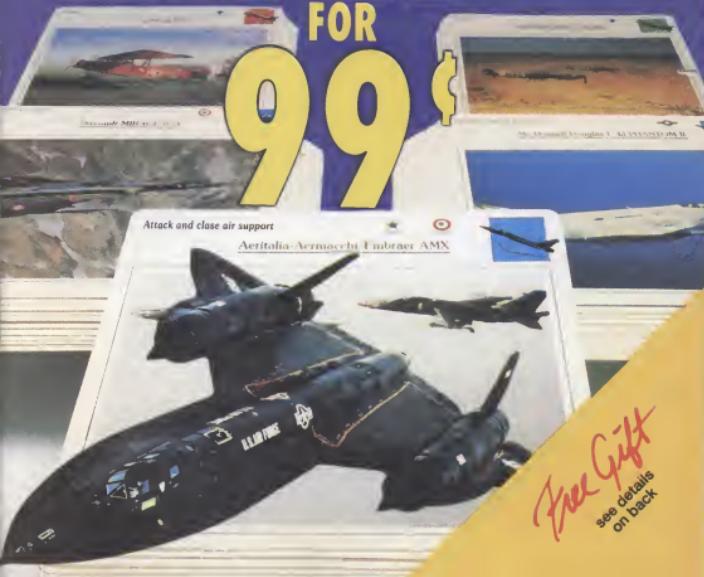
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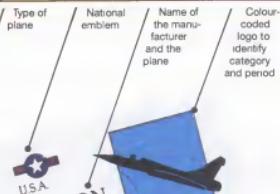
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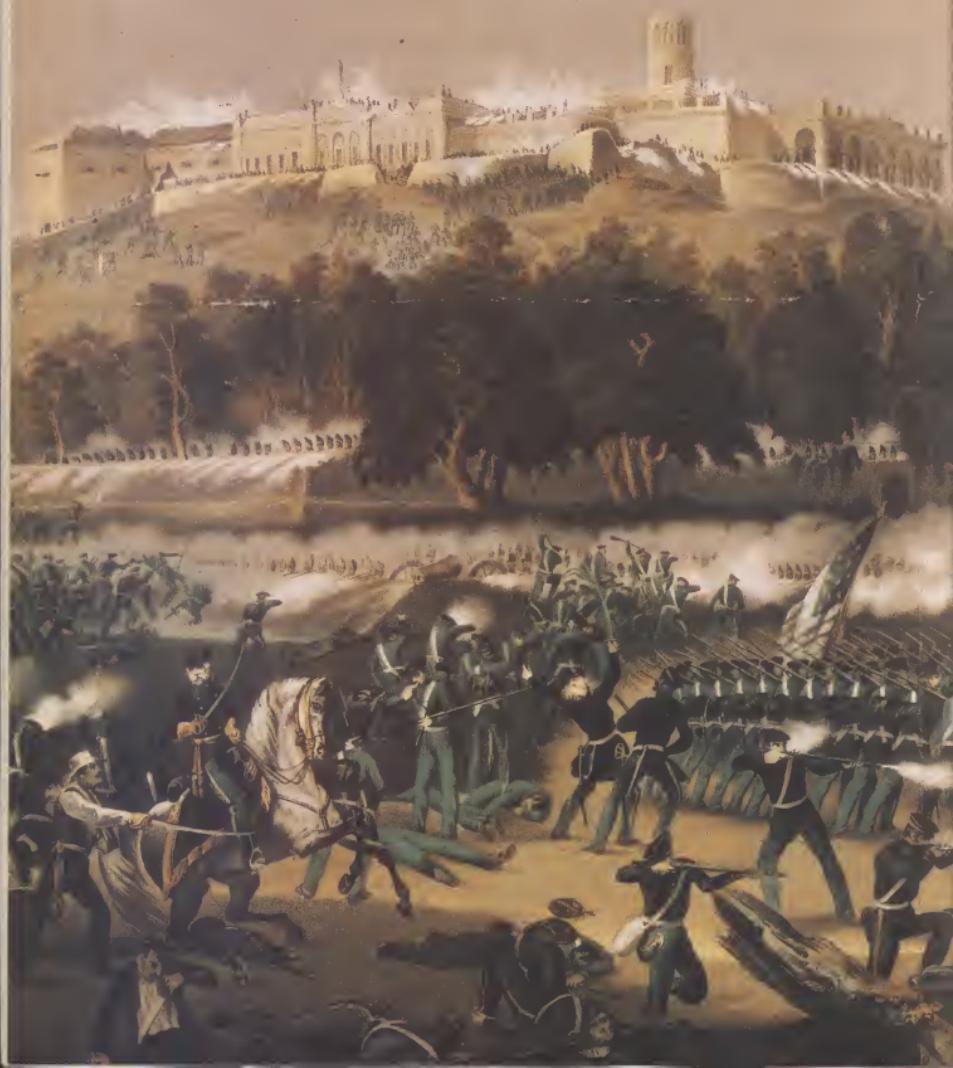
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On the morning of September 13, 1847, Maj. Gen. Gideon J. Pillow's infantry and Voltigeurs advance to clear Mexican snipers from the cypress trees at the base of Chapultepec, prior to making the 200-foot climb to El Castillo at its summit.



# NAKED SWORD IN HAND

For the Americans at Mexico City's doorstep, everything was all wrong.

They were outnumbered. They had no supply line to the rear.

They were surrounded by hostile territory on all sides...and so, they advanced!

By G.P. Stokes

In the early dawn of August 7, 1847, a column of blue-coated dragoons trotted out of the sleeping Mexican city of Puebla and turned westward, toward the distant snow-capped peaks of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl. It was the vanguard of an American army that, since landing at Veracruz in March, had marched and fought its way to within 70 miles of Mexico City.

Now deep in enemy country, his army outnumbered almost 3-to-1 by the forces that General Antonio López de Santa Anna had gathered to defend the Mexican capital against the hated Yankees, was America's venerable Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott. His lines of communication to the rear abandoned, like those of Hernando Cortes three centuries earlier, Scott had to win every battle lying ahead or face annihilation.

At the outset of the Mexican War in May of 1846, Maj. Gen. Zachary Taylor, campaigning along the Rio Grande, decisively had defeated the Mexicans at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. Following these victories, he invaded the northern Mexican province of Nuevo León and, after overcoming a stubbornly resisting garrison, captured the fortress city of Monterrey on September 25, 1846.

Such Taylor victories, plus successful American operations in New Mexico and California, raised President James K. Polk's expectations that the Mexican government would soon sue for peace. But instead, General Santa Anna rallied his scattered forces and Mexican resistance stiffened.

Reluctantly President Polk concluded that the only way to end the increasingly unpopular war was to invade the heart of Mexico and seize the capital. With 800 miles of rugged terrain lying between Taylor's army and Mexico City, however, invasion from the north clearly would be impractical. After several weeks of delay, President Polk approved the plan proposed by the U.S. Army's commander, Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott, for an amphibious landing on the Gulf of Mexico at Veracruz, to be followed by an advance on Mexico City.

On March 9, 1847, Scott landed, unopposed, near Veracruz with 10,000 men. After a prolonged artillery bombardment, the port with its harbor fortress fell on March 29 after a loss

of only 67 Americans killed or wounded. The next day Scott's vanguard, following the route once taken by Cortes, began its 260-mile march inland on the Mexican capital.

As they climbed out of the fever-ridden coastal plain, the Americans encountered their first serious resistance at Cerro Gordo. By April 18, after acting on information gathered during a daring scouting mission by Captain Robert E. Lee, Scott's men outflanked the Mexican positions and attacked the Mexican rear and left. Taken by surprise, Santa Anna fled after losing half of his 12,000-man army. Jalapa surrendered on April 20 and the great fortress at Perote fell two days later.

Although the one-sided battle of Cerro Gordo cost only 63 men, American losses mounted as Scott moved deeper into Mexico. Elusive guerrillas plundered the lightly defended American supply trains and made life hazardous for any Yankee unwise enough to stray beyond the sentry line.

Late in April, more than 3,000 men from seven volunteer regiments, their 12-month enlistments about to expire, ignored the entreaties of their officers to re-enlist and marched back to Veracruz for transportation back to the United States.

Only 70 miles from the Mexican capital, Scott was now forced to halt on May 15 at Puebla. Mounting losses, mainly from malaria and diarrhea, had reduced his force to only 5,000 effectives. Uncertain of when, or even if, reinforcements would arrive, he decided to augment his army by ordering the garrisons he had left behind at Perote and Jalapa to march to Puebla. While waiting for their arrival, the force with Scott exacted food and supplies from the local countryside. Reinforcements finally arrived during July and early August, bringing the army up to a paper strength of 14,000.

On August 7, the Americans resumed their advance as 10,783 men marched out of their camp at Puebla, leaving behind 3,000 invalids in the care of a small garrison. In his flamboyant manner, "Old Fuss and Feathers" was to write to William Marcy, Polk's secretary of war, "We had to throw away the scabbard and to advance with naked sword in hand."

Observers of the war in Mexico were unanimous in their criticism of Scott's daring (or foolhardy) decision to cut loose



When Maj. Gen. Winfield Scott (right) began his final advance on Mexico City on August 7, 1847, he led an army of 10,783 effectives, with no reinforcements or logistic support. His options were strictly limited to total victory or total disaster.

from his line of communications. Polk called it "a great military error" and a more qualified observer, the Duke of Wellington, exclaimed to a friend: "Scott is lost! He cannot capture the city and he cannot fall back on his base!"

The army that left Puebla in faded and patched uniforms was largely the creation of the tall, stern-faced man who commanded it. A soldier since 1808, Scott personally knew most of the officers and long-service sergeants in the minuscule Old Regular Army. Although he had earned the nickname Old Fuss and Feathers because of his fondness for showy uniforms and pomp and ceremony, Scott was a meticulous planner and a sound tactician.

For the advance into the Valley of Mexico he had organized his army into four divisions, giving commands to Brig. Gens. William J. Worth and David E. Twiggs, Regular Army veterans who had served under Zachary Taylor along the border, and Maj. Gens. John A. Quitman and Gideon J. Pillow, both militia generals. Quitman, who had acquired combat experience under Taylor, handled his division well. But Pillow, Polk's former law partner and generally regarded as the president's eyes and ears in the army, was a military novice who had demonstrated his ineptitude as a tactician at Cerro Gordo.

Sixteen understrength infantry regiments, thirteen regular and three volunteer, and a battalion of U.S. Marines formed the core of the little army. Regular artillerymen, most drawn from forts along the Atlantic seaboard, manned the big guns and howitzers of the siege train. Others served the quick-firing 6-pounder batteries commanded by young West Pointers like Captains Simon Drum and James Duncan.

While hundreds of Mexican lancers and mounted guerrillas hovered on his army's flanks, Scott was deficient in cavalry, having only one small brigade made up of detachments from three dragoon regiments. Several squadrons disembarked at Veracruz without mounts and served as in-

fantry until remounted on horses bought or captured from the Mexicans.

During its stay at Puebla, the army had drilled seven days a week. Honed by long hours on the parade ground, their ability to maneuver—to outflank static defenses—enabled the Americans to engage larger Mexican forces on equal terms.

On August 10, the American vanguard crossed the high pass between Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl and descended into the Valley of Mexico. In its center, Mexico City was screened to the east by three large lakes and shielded around much of its perimeter by marshes and irrigated fields.

Access to the city was largely limited to causeways—elevated roads running along the lake shores and over the low, wet land. A *garita*, a fortified building complex holding a police barracks and customs office, was located at the head of each causeway to control entry into the city. Mexico City's 25,000 defenders varied from veteran regiments to hastily recruited militia. Mexican gunners were well-trained and well-led, but their batteries, laboriously drawn into position by oxen, lacked the mobility of the American horse-drawn 6-pounders.

Anticipating a direct American advance on the city from the east, Santa Anna established his headquarters on El Peñón, a 450-foot hill commanding the highway, and garrisoned it with 7,000 men and 30 guns. But Scott, after receiving a report on the strength of the Mexican position from Captain Lee, sent his other divisions by forced march over a waterlogged road from Ayutla to San Augustin, 10 miles south of the city.

Santa Anna reacted quickly, fortifying San Antonio, two miles north of the American army, and directing his Maj. Gen. Gabriel Valencia, with 4,000 men, to occupy a hill west of the Contreras Road. Between those strongpoints lay the Pedregal, a lava bed with razor-sharp rocks and deep fissures that was regarded as impassable for artillery and cavalry. But

Lee and Lieutenant Pierre Beauregard, scouting for a way around Valencia's left, discovered a narrow track through the southern edge of the Pedregal. Engineers, assisted by infantry, marked and widened it and, by the afternoon of August 19, three brigades led by Brig. Gen. Persifor F. Smith crossed the Contreras Road north of Valencia's camp. Early the next morning Smith's men groped their way down a ravine to the rear of Valencia's camp. At dawn, while the Mexicans were distracted by a feint from the front by Brig. Gen. Franklin Pierce's brigade, Smith's force fired one volley and charged. It was all over in 17 minutes. With more than 1,500 of his men casualties or prisoners, Valencia and what remained of his command fled.

Realizing that his first line of defense was broken, Santa Anna sent orders for the garrison at San Antonio to fall back to Churubusco. But Worth, coming up from San Augustin, sent a brigade through the edge of the Pedregal around the Mexican left and cut the road between San Antonio and Churubusco. The Mexican retreat became a rout.

Scott, from his observation post in the Coyocan church tower, then ordered an attack on Churubusco, and the Americans overconfidently advanced through high cornfields that obscured the true strength of the Mexican position.

The Mexican left rested on the San Mateo Convent and its walled garden, defended by 1,800 troops under Maj. Gen. Manuel Rincon, one of Santa Anna's best generals. Three hundred yards to the east a regiment manned a redoubt protecting the southern approach to the bridge, while two more regiments lined the north bank of the Churubusco to protect the Mexican right, east of the bridgehead. Serving in the Mexican batteries on the walls of the convent garden and at the bridgehead were men of the "Patrío Battalion." Induced earlier to desert Taylor's army by appeals to shared Catholic faith and offers of land, the 260 San Patricios, many of them recent Irish immigrants to the United States, faced severe punishment if captured.

Twiggs' division had come within musket range of the convent when Rincon's batteries suddenly opened fire, sending the surprised Americans reeling back. General Worth, attacking the Mexican redoubt at the bridgehead, fared no better. The 6th Infantry, one of his best regiments, was twice beaten back.

Seeking to move around the convent, Scott sent two brigades across the Churubusco north of Coyocan, but Santa Anna had anticipated him and deployed his reserves along a ditch paralleling the road. As these Americans neared the road, accurate fire sent them back in disorder, as well.

At that point, however, Santa Anna, reacting to the threat against the road leading to Mexico City, withdrew troops from his regiments lining the river. Worth's men were then able to cross the Churubusco and circle behind the shortened line of defenders. Fearing that they were about to be cut off, the defenders of the bridgehead abandoned the redoubt to the U.S. 8th Infantry.

With the batteries at the bridgehead silenced, the Americans were able to force their way into the convent and drive the San Patricios from their guns. The garrison personnel fell back to the massive convent for a last stand. The Mexicans wished to surrender, but three times the desperate San Patricios pulled down the white flag raised by their comrades until the slaughter finally was halted by a white handkerchief that stayed on display.

The Mexican defenders lost 3,200 captured and 4,000 killed and wounded during the engagements of August 20, while the Americans counted 112 killed and 865 wounded. Confident that the Mexicans would soon ask for an armistice, Scott had his siege guns brought up and ordered his men to camp on the ground they had just taken.

The next morning Scott and Nicholas P. Trist, Polk's diplomatic representative, began discussions with a Mexican dele-



*During the assault on Chapultepec, an alert private discovered a canvas tube full of gunpowder that, if detonated, would have set off a minefield around the Americans.*

gation which led to an armistice on the 23rd that included the proviso that neither side would seek to improve its position while peace terms were being negotiated. At the same time that Santa Anna was protracting the negotiations with extravagant demands for the unconditional return of all New Mexico and California, however, he was rallying his scattered forces and strengthening the city's defenses. On September 6, Scott denounced the armistice and, with too few troops for a siege, laid plans to take Mexico City by assault.

That night American headquarters at Tacubaya received intelligence that church bells were being melted down and cast into cannons in the foundry of El Molino del Rey. Scott ordered Worth to destroy the foundry and the cannon barrels.

The buildings of El Molino occupied the western end of a walled park that extended westward for 1,000 yards from the Hill of Chapultepec. Since El Molino and the nearby magazine at the Casa Mata were extensions of the Chapultepec defensive complex, they held large garrisons.

At dawn on September 8, after a scout reported that El Molino had been abandoned, Worth ordered his division advanced in three columns: Lt. Col. John Garland's brigade to attack the south and east sides of El Molino; a picked command of 600 under Major George Wright to storm the west wall of the foundry; and Lt. Col. James S. McIntosh's brigade to seize the Casa Mata.

Wright's column had closed to within point-blank range when the batteries in El Molino opened a devastating fire, the first volley cutting down 11 of the 14 officers at the head of the column. A spirited Mexican counterattack retook them and drove Wright's men back in confusion.

McIntosh's brigade was checked 30 yards short of the Casa Mata by heavy fire, but Major Edwin Summers, with only 250 dragoons, rode directly at the Mexican irregulars, bluff-



After waiting an unnerving 15 minutes for their ladders to catch up with them, the American infantry was able to scale and overrun Chapultepec's walls.

ing them to a half before they could counterattack. Duncan then renewed his bombardment of the Casa Mata.

Action now centered on El Molino, where Garland's brigade battered in the gates and, fighting from room to room, drove the Mexicans from the foundry. Francis Perez, commanding the garrison in the Casa Mata, had no artillery to reply to the punishment meted out by Duncan's battery and ordered his men to retire. Shortly afterward the powder magazine blew up, killing six Americans who had entered the ruined building. By 1 p.m. the engagement was over and Scott's army was back in its old position.

Although the Mexicans had lost 2,000 men and El Molino was in ruins, it had been a Pyrrhic victory for the Americans. Scott's sources in Mexico City had misinformed him. No guns, only a few unused molds, were found in El Molino.

At a conference on the 11th, most of the American generals favored an attack on the San Antonio Garita. But Scott, arguing that the marshy soil between the causeways would make maneuvering difficult, ordered an attack on Chapultepec. This, he argued, would open up the western causeways leading to the Belén Garita and the lightly fortified San Cosmé Garita. To mask his intentions he ordered Twiggs to demonstrate against the southern garitas with only one brigade while he moved his real attack into position.

The defenses of Chapultepec were centered on top of the 200-foot hill at El Castillo, a massive building complex in which the nation's military college was located. It was a strong position; the north and south faces of the hill were too steep to climb. The southern road to the gate of the Colegio Militar was protected by a redan at the entrance and another at a bend in the road halfway up the hill. The western walls were protected by a ditch and a minefield at their bases, while halfway down the hill, breastworks had been erected to slow any attack from the ruins of El Molino.

On the 12th, four batteries of heavy howitzers, mortars and 24-pounder siege guns opened fire on the Chapultepec defenses. When Santa Anna arrived at the Colegio Militar during the bombardment, his General Nicolás Bravo, commander of the 1,000-man garrison, asked for more troops to man the 15-foot walls that extended for more than a mile around the buildings on the crest. But Santa Anna refused, still misled by Twiggs' movements into believing that the main attack would be against the Niño Perdido Garita.

Scott had hoped that the bombardment would drive Bravo's men off the hill, for El Castillo had been built not as a fort but as a residence for the Spanish viceroy. But, inspired by the resolute example of the 100 cadets of the Colegio Militar, its garrison was still holding out when night fell.

That evening Pillow was ordered to make the main attack against the west wall of the citadel. Supporting his right flank, Quitman kept the Mexicans from reinforcing Chapultepec and made a feint at the Belén Garita while Worth forced his way past the San Cosmé Garita.

Early the next morning the siege batteries resumed their pounding with solid shot, shifting to canister after two hours to clear snipers from the cypress grove that lay between El Molino and the western slope of Chapultepec. Promptly at 8 o'clock, the heavy batteries checked fire and Pillow's infantry surged out of the ruins of El Molino. Dodging from tree to tree, the 9th and 15th Infantries, flanked to the south by four companies of the Voltigeurs, an elite light-infantry regiment dressed in gray, cleared the cypress stand of its last snipers and, quickly overrunning the breastworks at the base of the hill, surged up the slopes.

But Pillow had entrusted the scaling ladders to raw men who, burdened with them, could not keep pace with the rapid advance of the infantry against the western wall. For 15 long minutes his men, jammed into the ditch below the wall, endured the fire pouring down from the parapets above.

Finally, the ladders arrived—to a chorus of curses from the impatient infantry massed at the base of the wall. The first few ladders were toppled backward by Bravo's men, but then, as first one and then another remained upright, the Americans swarmed up and over the parapet, driving the outnumbered garrison before them.

Coming up from Tacubaya, Quitman sent a brigade off to the left to join the assault on Chapultepec. The brigade reached the south wall just in time to join Pillow's men as they fought their way through the citadel, room by room. Most of the garrison surrendered, but the cadets, some only 13 years old, fought to the last. Six of them were to die and be immortalized in Mexican history as *Los Niños Héroes*.

Two miles away at Mixcoac, 26 San Patricios condemned to die stood with nooses around their necks—and cheered loudly when they saw the American flag hoisted over Chapultepec. Then the wagons under their feet lurched forward and they dropped to their deaths. An officer on Santa Anna's staff shook his head and groaned, "God is a yanqui."

Now Worth's division, plus two additional brigades and a battery of siege guns, moved northward from Chapultepec against light opposition and turned eastward onto the San Cosmé causeway. Under continuous fire from the *garita* and snipers on his left, Garland's brigade inched forward underneath the elevated viaduct that ran down the center of the causeway. North of the causeway, sappers in the van of Colonel Newman S. Clarke's brigade battered a hole in the wall of the first house they reached, then burrowed from one building to the next with pickaxes and crowbars, while the infantry cleared out the snipers with bayonets. Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant, with men of the 4th Infantry, placed a mountain howitzer in a church tower and took the redoubt under fire. By 5 o'clock the defenders of the redoubt had abandoned it and retreated behind the ruined walls of the *garita*.



The bloody, four-hour fight for Chapultepec sealed the fate of Mexico City and ended a campaign whose daring—and brilliant success—amazed such observers as the Duke of Wellington, who called it “unsurpassed in military annals.”

Within an hour, Worth's division had entered the northwestern section of the city. Judging that it was too late to continue his advance, he ordered his men to bivouac in the houses they had just taken, but at midnight, he had a 10-inch mortar lob five shells at the presidential palace.

While Worth was advancing on San Cosmé, Quitman, without orders, turned what was to have been a feint against the Belén Garita into a personal race to beat Worth into the city. Collecting the regiments that had just stormed Chapultepec, he personally led them down the Belén causeway. Greatly outnumbered, the garita's 180-man garrison fought bravely until, their ammunition exhausted, the survivors retreated to the *Ciudadela*, a large, fortified barracks 300 yards north of the *garita*.

Using three captured cannons and their own battery, Quitman's gunners spent the rest of the afternoon fighting an unequal duel (in which every American artillery officer was killed or wounded) with the 18-gun battery of the *Ciudadela*. After they ran low on ammunition while fighting off counterattacks from the *Ciudadela*, Quitman's men spent an uneasy night in the ruined *garita*.

Although the city's defenses were now broken, Scott's army had suffered almost 1,000 casualties. Now down to less than 7,000, it faced days of savage street fighting. But the city's leaders had had enough. Perhaps persuaded by Worth's midnight mortar shells, the city council prevailed upon Santa Anna to withdraw from the city and retire to Guadalupe Hidalgo with what remained of his army. Just before dawn, the mayor

and three aldermen waited on Scott in his headquarters at Chapultepec and surrendered the city.

The next morning the American soldiers, looking like scarecrows in their ragged uniforms, marched into the Grand Plaza. There, while Harney's mounted dragoon band played “Yankee Doodle,” they cheered themselves hoarse as their old general, resplendent in gleaming epaulets and an abundance of gold lace, raised his white-plumed hat in acknowledgment. There would be more fighting before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war on February 2, 1848, but effectively, Mexican resistance was finished.

For sheer audacity crowned by success, Scott's capture of Mexico City today is regarded as the equal of MacArthur's 1950 Inchon-Seoul campaign. Even Wellington later wrote: “His campaign was unsurpassed in military annals. He is the greatest living soldier.” □

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# BATTLE AT FLOOD TIDE

At the twin villages of Aspern and Essling in the spring of 1809, Napoleon was prepared for battle with Austrian Archduke Charles. He was halfway across the Danube... and then came the flood tide!

By David Johnson

**B**y the beginning of April, the paperwork required to launch the greatest war machine in Europe on an imperial campaign had been flowing out from Marshal Louis-Alexandre Berthier's office for more than seven weeks—and a great deal of unwelcome news had been flowing in. In the period leading up to a final concentration of Napoleon's army, the chief of staff's fingernails were habitually bitten until they bled and, in 1809, on top of all the usual headaches, Berthier had to cope with the problems caused by Marshal Francois Lefebvre's tendency to misinterpret all but the simplest orders and Marshal Andre Masséna's administration, which was notoriously lax. On April 4, for instance, Berthier informed Masséna of the emperor's displeasure at learning that Cara St. Cyr's division of IV Corps had no cartridges, despite the division's recent passage through Strasbourg, where there were plenty of supplies.

The fact is, nearly everything written by Napoleon or Berthier in this period has the ring of urgency, of plans brought hastily forward. In the second week of April, Napoleon wrote Berthier: "You do not mention the arrival of the bakers and oven-builders which I ordered to be put in hand at Metz, Strasburg [sic] and Nancy. I regret your not writing on this point which is of great importance. Raise a company of Bavarian masons at Munich, you know we can never have too many... I have despatched Constantine, my aide de camp, to Innsbruck; send him a courier, so he can let you have the route of the 40,000 men coming from Italy through the Tyrol..."

By this time the emperor had begun to address his aides de camp as "Monsieur le Général" instead of the more intimate "tu," a development that always made them uneasy. On the 10th he wrote to Berthier, "As the Austrians are very slow in their operations it is possible that they may not attack before the 15th." The day that this was penned (which happened to be Marshal Jean Lannes' 40th birthday), the Austrian Archduke Charles crossed the Inn River with 140,000 men.

On the 13th, Napoleon left Paris; on the 15th, he crossed the Rhine. In the haste of departure, several of his aides were



French infantrymen of Boudet's Division repulse one of five determined attacks by Austrian grenadiers in Defense of the Granary at Essling, by F. von Myrbach. Essling had changed hands seven times when Austrian Archduke Charles told Baron Dedovich: "For the eighth time, you will attack with your division, or I will have you shot."





Napoleon Before Vienna, by Alexander Pock. The Austrian capital fell to him on May 13, 1809, but Napoleon still needed to engage the Austrian army in decisive battle.

riding cuirassier mounts. Two of the horses the emperor used were on loan to him from the King of Bavaria.

By choosing Bavaria as his area of operations, the archduke had acted on Austrian hopes of a German uprising, but not one of Max Joseph's subjects was prepared to take up arms against Napoleon, who now lost no time in bringing Charles to battle. Arriving at the front on April 17, Napoleon formed a strike force of three corps, led by Lannes, Louis Davout and Lefebvre, and launched it three days later in a bloody action that split the Austrian army in two.

Charles retreated with the Austrian right toward Eckmuhl, while the left under Johann Hiller moved south on Landshut. Caught there between Lannes and Masséna, Hiller was soundly beaten and retreated, leaving behind a huge amount of materiel that included 600 caissons and 30 guns. Meanwhile, the archduke attacked Davout at Eckmuhl, but the victorious French troops coming up from Landshut made him break off the action and recross the Danube to the left bank. Next day, the Austrian garrison remaining behind at Ratisbon surrendered and nine battalions were taken intact. By May 3, when Hiller was again beaten at Ebelsberg, Austrian losses amounted to more than 20,000 killed and wounded and 15,000 taken prisoner.

The French infantry had lived up to its best traditions, one division having covered 94 miles in five days, fighting most of the way. Unopposed, 30 miles over fields had been the daily average, while one light infantry unit had marched 50 miles in 38 hours. "Soldiers, you have done all I expected of you," Napoleon had declared after the storming of Ratisbon. "Within a month we shall be in Vienna."

Their march to the capital was in pleasant contrast with their recent exertions. Whenever the French entered a town

they found the inhabitants waiting to greet them in the squares and marketplaces with huge tubs of beer; in spite of this, a French officer wrote, "we looted just the same."

On May 13, Vienna surrendered, the garrison retreating by the great bridge of Tabor, which the Austrians set on fire.

Soon after, having been recalled at the eleventh hour from Spain, General Antoine Lasalle arrived in the capital to take over command of his light cavalry division (and set the ladies' hearts aflutter). This former colonel of the 10th Hussars was one of the most colorful characters that even the Napoleonic army ever produced—and one of the most talented, a brilliant advance-guard general who was always a blaze of fire and decision on the battlefield. His extravagant personality was reflected in his predilection for luxurious uniforms, fine wines, lovely women, chargers sired by Arab stallions out of blood mares and methods of letting off steam that were more than merely boisterous—it was quite common for the keeper of an inn where Lasalle was entertaining his officers to present a bill for damages incurred.

Lasalle was much too intelligent an officer not to realize that his career had reached its climax as the golden age of cavalry was drawing to a close. Due to the improvements in artillery tactics and design, the effectiveness of cavalry on the battlefield had been decreasing for nearly half a century—it was only the genius of

Napoleon and the unorthodoxy of his methods that had made possible the last flaring of a burnt-out firework. For a man of Lasalle's character and temperament, the anticlimax of a career in slow decline was to be avoided at all costs. With his infallible sense of timing, he knew his chance to make a dashing exit in a blaze of glory was slipping away.

Whatever the future prospects for cavalry, however, another major factor for the campaigner in Napoleon's day was... bridges.

When Napoleon had taken Vienna four years before in 1805, his overriding aim had been to cross the Danube and engage the enemy to his front before an Austrian army could move to attack his rear. This he had accomplished without difficulty, aided by Vienna's four bridges over the Danube, all of which had been left intact.

In 1809 his need to cross the Danube and fight a decisive battle was just as pressing, but the wooden bridges had been burned down by the Austrians. The French army had no bridging train, whereas the Archduke Charles had two; thus, the Austrian generalissimus was in a position to cross the river upstream of the French army and make it fight with its face turned toward home.

In the vast water labyrinth formed by the Danube's branches at Vienna, there were several islands which could assist a French bridging operation, the most suitable being one called the Schwarze-Laken. This lay upstream of the capital opposite the village of Nussdorf, which would have made an ideal starting point for a bridge. Another possibility was the village of Kaiser-Ebersdorf, six miles to the east of Vienna. In order to pass Lannes' and Masséna's corps simultaneously over the river, Napoleon decided to build a bridge from each of these places.



Schwarze-Laken, upstream from Vienna, would have made the ideal place for Napoleon's army to bridge the Danube, but the French force sent to the island on May 13 was overwhelmed by the Austrian 49th Infantry Regiment, as commemorated in F. Neumann's painting.

In a badly managed operation, 500 men of the 72nd and 105th Line were landed on the Schwarze-Laken, where they were attacked and overwhelmed by a superior force of Austrians. Everything now depended on bridging the river from Kaiser-Ebersdorf.

On the face of it, this presented no great problems, since at that point, the island of Lobau made a convenient stepping-stone 6 miles long by 4½ miles wide. Except on its swampy eastern side, the island was a huge *place d'Armes* on which Napoleon could mass men, guns, horses, wagons and equipment, together with all the materials needed to bridge the river from Lobau to the left bank.

Between the Vienna bank of Ebersdorf and Lobau, the first arm of the river, 825 yards wide, contained two smaller islands and a sandbank. Beyond Lobau, varying in width from 140 to 180 yards, lay the second arm of the river, known as the Stadlau Branch, and beyond that was the plain of the Marchfeld, on which Napoleon expected Charles to fight.

In case the archduke opposed the crossing, it was vital for the French to establish bridgeheads in the two villages on the farther bank. Both had good defensive features, being enclosed by earth embankments to keep out floods, and they were connected to each other by a trench. Most of their houses were built of stone. The one, Aspern, had several streets and a cemetery surrounded by a stout wall. The other, Essling, had only one street, but its granary was a three-story structure of brick, 36 meters by 10, proof against cannon shots up to the first story and big enough to house 400 men.

On the evening of May 13, Napoleon told Masséna to organize the Ebersdorf bridging operation in liaison with his corps artillery commander, General Pernetti, and the army's chief engineer, General Henri-Gatien Bertrand. Masséna was an old hand at crossing rivers—10 years earlier, in a blizzard, he had crossed the Upper Rhine when it was in flood by building a bridge of local timber, personally supervising his sappers as they worked in ice-cold water up to their necks.

The first stage of the operation would be to lay a bridge of boats over the first arm of the Danube to Lobau. As soon

as this was done, the advance guard and Lasalle's light cavalry would pass over into Lobau, together with the material needed to bridge the Stadlau arm to the left bank. The bridging system the French had chosen entailed anchoring a line of flat-bottomed, sheer-sided boats at well-defined intervals and covering them with wooden planks. If the anchoring and spacing were properly done, such a bridge would support the weight of mounted regiments, artillery field pieces and closed-up infantry columns marching in fours, at an average rate of passage of 6,000 or 7,000 men per hour.

To throw such a bridge across the Danube at Vienna called for many hours of backbreaking work, but the French *pontonniers* were used to that; in Napoleon's army the basic bridging unit, the *bateau gribeauval*, was more than 36 feet long by more than 4 feet high and weighed more than 4,000 pounds.

As the length of bridge covered by each boat was 32 feet, 80 boats would be needed for the section between the Vienna bank and Lobau. Bertrand already had 48 boats in good repair, and another 32 which he thought could be made ready by the following night; the work would require a great deal of material, including 3,000 beams, 400 joists and 5,000 to 6,000 fathoms of rope. The second arm of the river, the Stadlau Branch, would be bridged by three trestles and by 15 pontoons captured from the Austrians at Landshut.

By the 17th, 91 boats had been assembled, 70 of which had rigging, oars and accessories. Twelve proved to be too heavy; 38 were suitable for floating supports and 20 more could be made so while the bridging was still in progress.

Since he was committing his army to the passage of a great river on a line of hastily assembled boats, rafts, trestles and pontoons, Napoleon was taking a tremendous risk by providing neither cruising vessels nor a boom to protect against enemy fireships. But there was an even greater danger, one which Napoleon may have failed to understand at all.

When the French army had crossed the Danube in 1805, it had been late autumn. The bridges at Vienna were intact. There had been no need to take account of the effect that melting snows might have on the river. In 1809, according



When Napoleon called for Vienna's defenders to surrender their commander, Archduke Maximilian hesitated, playing for time. On the evening of May 11, Napoleon's artillery fired 2,000 rounds into the city. At 2 a.m. on May 13, Vienna capitulated.

to the artillery general, Baston, Comte de Lariboisière, there was even less cause for concern since the weather was good and there was no sign of a storm.

But it was precisely the fair weather that made Napoleon's plan so hazardous. It was no use basing plans or theories on the behavior of the Rhine, which melting snows raised no more than a foot or so. The Danube was very different. Of its 400 tributaries, many came from the Swiss or Tyrolean uplands and the Bavarian Alps. In May and June, the melting snows from these regions could mise the Danube at Vienna by as much as 15 feet—already that spring of 1809, the level had varied from 4 feet above an extreme low-water mark to 13 feet below flood level. When the river reached its maximum height, each of its arms became a miniature sea in which islets and sandbanks disappeared and trees torn from the river banks would sweep downstream on the torrent.

Nevertheless the die was cast. By the third week in May the mass of materials assembled at Ebersdorf included timber, planks, beams, posts, piles, pickets, rails, anchors, chains, ropes, small boats, wherries, pontoons, forges, engines and workmen's tools. The French now also had the use of an immense chain, captured from the Turks during the Siege of Vienna and preserved ever since in the city's arsenal, which was long enough to span the river from bank to bank. In the dockyard, screened from Austrian eyes by a small copse, boats were being floated onto a deep, narrow creek that served as a dock, while hundreds of officers and thousands of artisans worked on preparing and cutting up wood.

At night, pontoon detachments and Guard Marines patrolled the river bank, testing the depth of the water and spying out the best anchorage spots. Since only 38 pontoon anchors and grapnels were available, massive cannon from Vienna's arsenal and open chests full of cannon balls were kept ready to be submerged in the water to hold the mooring cables.

While Bertrand's men toiled at their tasks, the French infantry took its ease. There was a regular ration issue and plenty of wine, sometimes a liter per man, never less than a demiliter. Much of the wine came from the enormous cellars of the convent at Kloster-Neuburg, carried to the banks of the Danube in convoys of wagons. Life was even more pleasant for the officers quartered in Vienna, where the cafés provided not only music and refreshments but the chance of a romantic encounter as well.

For the senior officers, nothing occasioned greater pleasure than an invitation to dine with General G. Mouton, hero of the charge across the burning timbers of the Elbelsberg bridge. Mouton was billeted in the mansion lately vacated by Prince Trautmandsдорff, grand marshal to the Austrian court, who had generously left his butler and chef behind to look after the new occupant.

There was still no sign of the corps of 25,000 Russians that the czar was supposed to be putting at Napoleon's disposal. "An officer from the Czar arrived every week at our headquarters," General A.J. Savary tells us, "and a very active correspondence was kept up between Russia and ourselves, but we didn't want correspondence, we wanted battalions."

One of the more familiar sights at Ebersdorf in the third week of May was the slight and elegant figure of Colonel de Sainte Croix, Masséna's senior aide de camp. Sainte Croix was an extremely brave and intelligent officer, but with his lack of height, delicate features and hands like a girl's, he was not the type that Napoleon expected to find serving on the staff of a French marshal. Napoleon had in fact brought pressure on Masséna to replace him, but without result.

Determined, no doubt, to justify Masséna's faith in him, Sainte Croix had made a dashing start to the campaign; after capturing an Austrian standard he had been promoted to colonel at the age of 27.

On the evening of May 18, having been picked by Masséna to lead the advance party to Lobau, Sainte Croix took command of a detachment of infantry, which then crossed over to the island in barques. According to Savary, Napoleon personally supervised the embarkation, arranging to have early barques contain the maximum number of men.

Unlike the force he sent into Schwarze-Laken, the advance party established itself without loss. By next morning more than 80 boats were ready to be put into place on the Vienna bank, together with rafts, baulks and abutments. Boats were being prepared to send Sainte Croix's party over the Stadlau arm to the left bank; several more boats had been tied together to form flying bridges in which workmen would pass to and fro. By 6 p.m. on the 19th, the first arm of the river had been bridged, and the Austrian pontoons for bridging the Stadlau arm were taken in carts to Lobau.

Orders had now gone out for the light cavalry brigades of Piré, Bruyère, Colbert and Marulaz to be at the Ebersdorf bridgehead at 5 o'clock the next morning. Lannes' corps was to arrive at 9 a.m., followed by the cuirassier divisions of Nansouty, Saint Sulpice and Espagne. These three divisions comprised 14 heavy cavalry regiments with a strength of more than 9,000 men; General L.B.J. d'Espagne had 109 officers and 2,670 cuirassiers in four regiments (the 4th, 6th, 7th and 8th).

On the 20th the French troops began to mass in Lobau, complete with artillery trains. The only building on the island was a hunting lodge used by the Austrian royal family, and of the three things essential to the French soldier's morale, all that Lobau could provide was wood for the bivouac fires; dry straw to sleep on was not to be had, and neither was food. "My second brigade, which passed over first, has had no rations for two days," General Gabriel J.J. Molitor informed Masséna on the 20th. "There is absolutely nothing in this island; these men are really up against it."

At 3 p.m. on the 20th, Sainte Croix crossed to the left bank with 200 of Molitor's "Voltigeurs." They had two tasks: to protect the "Pontonniers" bridging the second arm of the river and to make fast to the left bank a cable which would support the final section of the bridge.

The Stadlau arm of the river was deep and swollen, and the captured Austrian pontoons and trestles just failed to stretch from Lobau to the left bank. Consequently, the final section of the bridge had to be made of tree trunks covered with joists. As soon as this was finished, Molitor's division and Lasalle's four light cavalry regiments passed over it to the Marchfeld. Driving off the Austrian outposts on the left bank, Molitor occupied Aspern with companies of the 67th while Lasalle's horsemen fanned out into the plain. Two more of Masséna's divisions, led by General J. Boudet and Claude J.A. Legend, were ready to follow from Lobau.

By now the river had begun to rise and was moving so fast that regiments making the crossing found themselves moving over "ricketty planks washed and shaken by the rushing waters." The cavalrymen went on foot leading their horses, the infantry three abreast, while Guard Marines and Pontonniers patrolling the river in boats manfully staved off the tree trunks and other debris that were now being swept downstream. At 5 p.m., a vessel launched by the enemy upstream smashed into the Vienna section of the bridge, causing such damage that the passage of troops onto Lobau was halted—it was clear that repairs would take several hours. At this time Lannes' corps was still on the right bank of the river; so were two of the cuirassier divisions, the artillery parks and Davout's corps, which was marching for Ebersdorf via Vienna.

The light cavalry division that should have followed Lasalle's was now split into three parts. One squadron of the 3rd Chasseurs was already on the left bank, the rest of the regiment was in Lobau, and the other four regiments of the division were still on the Vienna bank.



Marshal André Masséna supervised the Lobau bridging operation. On the night of May 20, he alone suspected that Archduke Charles' army was closer than Napoleon believed.

This division was led by a general of brigade, Jacob-François Marulaz, one of the toughest *sabreurs* and finest tacticians in the French cavalry. Since Austria was the traditional enemy, the French army had for many years posted German-speaking troopers in the van of her light cavalry screen and, like many of his compatriots in French service, Marulaz had begun his career in a hussar regiment. A native of the Palatinate, this former colonel of the 8th Hussars still spoke ungrammatical French with a pronounced German accent despite 20 years of service, during which time he had had more than 20 horses killed under him and received 17 wounds, five of them in a single day. It was Marulaz who had captured the Austrian pontoons at Landshut, a useful addition to his service record, which also included the capture of 27 Russian guns at the Battle of Golymin.

According to General Lasalle, the *Chasseurs à Cheval* of the Guard was the most beautiful regiment in the world. Its troopers were dressed in hussar-style uniforms, the richest in the French army, and in addition to being extremely elegant they were extremely tough. Some of them carried ten or more wound scars under their dolmans; the senior NCO's were equal in experience to captains of the line. When the French Emperor was on campaign a troop of the regiment acted as his mounted escort; its horses were kept saddled and bridled throughout its 48-hour tour of duty, its commanding officer followed Napoleon wherever he went.

On the night of May 20, riding with drawn sabers in the moonlight, the troopers of the *peloton d'escorte* galloped behind Napoleon and Masséna as they reconnoitered the legendary Marchfeld.

Since the bridging work had been carried out without serious opposition, Napoleon had decided that Charles' army was farther away than he had originally thought, and the reports



General Broussier's division takes up a single square formation at the Battle of Wagram on July 6, 1809. The French triumph at Wagram canceled out Archduke Charles' victories at Aspern-Essling—the consequence of his failure to follow them up.

of Lasalle's light cavalry patrols had done nothing to change his mind. There were no travelers or couriers to be intercepted on the Marchfeld, as there had always been in Prussia and Spain; consequently, Lasalle's officers had had nothing to go on but the evidence of their own eyes and ears.

Unlike Napoleon, Marshal Masséna believed that the Austrian army was already within striking distance and that it would attack in a few hours. The man who had saved France by keeping his nerve in front of Zurich was not given to imaginary fears, but there was nothing to be seen that night except the flicker of an advance guard's fire well off to the northeast—the only sounds were the jingle of French harnesses and the croak of frogs.

Still not convinced that Napoleon was right, still not knowing how long it would take to repair the bridge, Masséna returned to Aspern and roused Lasalle from a deep sleep. The advance guard specialist could tell him nothing new.

Seven miles away, Austria's general-in-chief was in his headquarters on the Bisamberg hill. The Marchfeld was a place of special significance to an Austrian archduke, for it was there that Rudolf had founded the power of the German Hapsburgs in 1278; for Charles, the battle he planned to fight there would be the culmination of the long struggle against the archenemy of what he called "Our House," the struggle of Hapsburg against Valois, Hapsburg against Bourbon, finally against the revolutionary upheaval out of France that had shaken Europe's monarchies to their foundations and was now embodied in the person of Napoleon Bonaparte. He had already issued his Order of the Day:

"Soldiers, we shall fight a battle here tomorrow. On it will depend the existence of the Austrian monarchy, the throne of our good Kaiser Franz, the fate of each one of you. The Fatherland, the Monarchy, your parents and your friends all have their eyes upon you, sure of your courage and your strength."

There were very few things worth knowing about the Imperial Austrian Army that André Masséna had failed to learn in his long years of service. He knew that the Marchfeld was Austria's equivalent to the Champ de Mars, the one place in Europe where Austrian generals could maneuver, if necessary, with their eyes shut; and it was on the Marchfeld, his instinct told him, that Charles meant to fight the greatest battle of his career.

Shortly after midnight a vast circle of tiny pinpoints of light appeared on the darkened horizon northwest of Aspern, and the clouds in the direction of Bohemia were suffused by a dull red glow. Marshal Masséna saw these phenomena from the belfry of Aspern church, and he knew that they came from the campfires of the Austrian army.

At 3 a.m. on the 21st, repairs to the Vienna bridge were completed and the passage of the army onto Lobau was resumed. By daybreak great masses of men, guns and wagons had assembled on the island.

The three French infantry divisions on the Marchfeld, all belonging to Masséna's corps, were led by three of Napoleon's toughest *divisionnaires*. Boudet and Gabriel Molitor were both veterans of Masséna's Zurich campaign, in which Molitor had routed the Russian Alexander Suvorov's advance guard with three weak battalions of the 84th Demibrigade. Boudet, famous for his division's march to Marengo with Louis Desaix, had joined a dragoon regiment under the monarchy, and was probably the only Napoleonic infantry general who could claim to have been punished by 50 strokes with the flat of a cavalry blade. Both of them were 40 years old. General Claude Legrand, a tall, impressive-looking man with a stentorian voice, had been a soldier for more than 30 years, having joined the army as a 15-year-old orphan in 1777.

Most of Molitor's division was posted around the tile works south of Aspern, with a holding force forward in the village; Boudet was in Essling, forming the French right, with Legrand



By 4 p.m. on May 21, Austrian forces were converging on the French at Aspern and Essling from all directions. Both villages changed hands many times as the French fought desperately to protect their tenuous escape route over the still-rising Danube.

in reserve on Molitor's left rear and acting as bridge guard. Masséna's fourth division, led by Cara St. Cyr, had not yet crossed.

The left was under Masséna's command. To Marshal Lannes, Napoleon had entrusted the right and center, the latter formed by Espagne's four regiments of cuirassiers and Lasalle's four regiments of light cavalry, drawn up in the space between the villages and all under the immediate orders of Marshal Jean Baptiste Bessières. Marulaz with his light cavalry was on the extreme left, covering the space between Aspern and the Danube.

Mounted since 4 a.m., Napoleon had summoned his senior officers to a conference held on horseback and canvassed their opinions. Lannes believed that there was nothing in front of the French positions except a rear guard of 600 to 800 men, while Bessières said there was nothing for several miles. Berthier, as expected, agreed with Napoleon; only Mouton believed that Masséna was right and that the Austrian army would soon attack.

It was, in fact, forming in two lines on rising ground behind Gerasdorf, between the Bisamberg hill and the Russbach stream. At 9 a.m. the archduke ordered arms to be piled, and the men ate breakfast. At noon, with the sun blazing from a cloudless sky, the advance began.

It resembled the outer edge of a huge fan, with Hiller and Heinrich von Bellegarde on the Austrian right, Hohenzollern in the center, Dedovich and Rosenberg on the left. Between Hohenzollern and Dedovich was the cavalry reserve, formed by more than 8,000 men in 72 squadrons. The total force of cavalry deployed comprised 54 squadrons of cuirassiers and dragoons and 93 squadrons of light cavalry and lancers, the infantry of 93 battalions, plus 17 battalions of grenadiers in their handsome peaked bearskins, with the ends of their moustaches waxed into horns. The artillery consisted of 18 batteries of brigade, 13 of position, and 11 of hored, with a total of 288 guns.

The bands played Turkish music, and the men cheered and sang as they marched. Three of the five huge columns moved against Aspern; two more marched for Essling, supported by a mass of horse.

When General Molitor saw what was advancing on Aspern he immediately reinforced the garrison, which had previously consisted of a few companies of the 67th. His division of 12 battalions now braced itself to receive the 54 battalions and 43 squadrons of the Austrian right. At 3 p.m. the leading columns attacked—and the two days of carnage known as the Battle of Aspern-Essling began.

Meanwhile the Danube had continued to rise. An hour after the battle began, the Vienna bridge ruptured for the second time; thus Lannes' corps, Davout's corps, the 1st and 2nd heavy cavalry divisions and the artillery park were all unable to reach the left bank, where Masséna and Lannes had only 27 battalions and 38 squadrons.

Austrian sources quote the strength of Charles' army as 75,000 men, but this figure implies a strength of 500 men per battalion and in earlier actions it had been at least double that. French historians prefer a total of 90,000 infantry and 12,000 to 15,000 horse, against which Masséna and Lannes had barely 16,000 infantry and just over 6,000 cavalry at the beginning of the battle.

In the next four hours both Aspern and Essling were taken and retaken several times. Led by Bessières, Espagne and Lasalle, the French cavalry charged repeatedly, now against the Austrian infantry, now against Prince John of Lichtenstein's cavalry, now against the enemy guns. In Aspern, said an Austrian account: "The parties engaged each other in every street, every house and every barn; carts, ploughs and harrows had to be removed, during an interrupted fire, in order to get at the enemy; every wall was a hindrance to the attackers and a rampart for the defenders; the steeple, lofty trees, the garrets and the cellars had to be taken before either side



Austrian and French cuirassiers battle it out in an illustration by J.N. von Höchle. The Austrian capturing a French cavalry standard is imaginary: the five eagles that the Austrians captured during the 1809 campaign were all from infantry units.

could call itself master of the place, and yet the possession was ever of short duration, for no sooner had we taken a street or a house than the French gained another, forcing us to abandon the former. Many houses had been set on fire by the shells of both sides and lit up the whole country around."

The Marchfeld was beginning to take on a hellish aspect. From the French side, Baron Louis-François Lejeune writes of thick black clouds of smoke through which the sun shone like a blood-red globe of fire, bathing the entire landscape in crimson. In Aspern the smoke was so dense that men almost suffocated in it, crossing bayonets with opponents they could not even see. By the time the Austrians had taken the churchyard, all Masséna's horses had been killed. Sword in hand at the head of Molitor's grenadiers, Masséna led them forward on foot and drove out the Austrians from the forward edge of the village, pursuing them for 12 or 14 yards beyond the houses, none of which had been loopholed.

Five times in three hours Masséna took and retook the cemetery and church, still keeping Legrand's division in reserve. As the battle raged, Masséna stood under the elms on a green opposite the church, heedless of the branches brought crashing down around him by the Austrian grapeshot.

To the left of the village, Marulaz charged repeatedly against the Austrians trying to work their way round behind it, and though he slowed down their advance he could not stop it. Southwest of the village lay a small plain which was the Achilles' heel of the French position, and surely the place where Charles should have committed the 17 battalions of grenadiers that he was keeping in reserve. Fortunately for Masséna, the only Austrian force to attack in that quarter consisted of four battalions.

Meanwhile, Bessières was leading Espagne's cuirassiers against the flank of Rosenberg's infantry east of Essling. On Bessières' orders, Lasalle's four light cavalry regiments charged the Austrian infantry formed in squares, but volleys of musketry drove them back. Caught between the Riesch Dragoons

and the Blankenstein Hussars, the 24th Chasseurs was badly mauled. In Espagne's division the 7th Cuirassiers alone lost 8 officers, 104 men and 168 horses on this first day of battle. Espagne himself was mortally wounded and three of his four colonels were killed.

By late afternoon the bridge had been repaired and, at 6 p.m., Cara St. Cyr's division reached the Marchfeld. Masséna immediately sent orders for its leading regiment, the 46th Line, to halt just in front of the bridgehead in order to guard it, and called Legrand up to reinforce Molitor in Aspern. There were two things that the defenders of Aspern remembered for a long time after the battle—Masséna telling them to step forward so as not to fight on the bodies of the dead, and the tall figure of Legrand, with his hat half shot away by grape and his aide de camp lying dead at his feet.

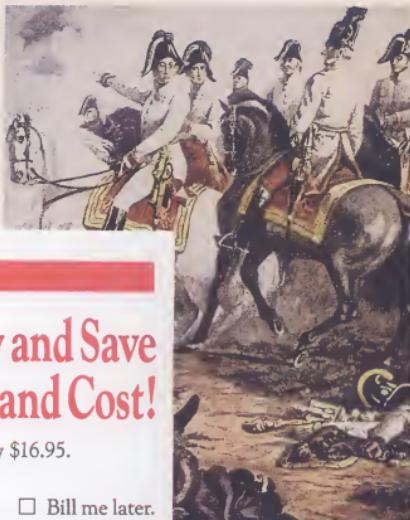
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Several times during the battle Lannes had infuriated Bessières by sending an aide de camp to tell him to "charge right home." When the two marshals chanced to meet in camp that night, a bitter argument developed; only the intervention of Masséna stopped them from drawing their swords.

At 3 o'clock the next morning the Austrian guns opened up a cannonade. An hour later their columns began to form for a new attack.

On the 22nd, the French buildup on the Marchfeld increased, but the unstable bridges still gave trouble and continuous passage was impossible. The cannon sunk in the Danube to act as anchors had settled on gravel and had not sunk deeply enough in it to resist the currents of the flooding river—or the impact of stone-filled barges launched by the Austrians upstream.

There were now so many troops crowded into the French bridgehead that General Boulart of the Guard artillery found it hard to give his guns a decent field of fire. The Austrian guns, presented with so many targets in so confined a space, caused terrible casualties. Lannes' aide, d'Albuquerque, was decapitated and so was a grenadier in the act of shortening Masséna's stirrup. The Austrian gunners were using the same tactics employed by the French against the Russians at Friedland two years earlier—that is, moving right up to the enemy front lines and showering them with case. Witness Captain J. Coignet of the Guard: "To the left of Essling the enemy planted 50 pieces of cannon in front of us, and two in front of the chasseurs [à pied]. When the cannon balls fell on us



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BOUDET, a huge wall of fire that the French, courageous to operate while anchored in the middle of the river. This the Austrians now smothered in tar, filled with inflammable materials, set on fire and cut adrift on the current. Although it could have blown up at any moment, the French marines who were patrolling the river in small boats flung anchors, ropes and chains at it and managed to deflect it into an open space where a span of the bridge had already broken away.

Meanwhile, the Danube was now so high that parts of the Prater woods were flooded and it seemed quite possible that Lobau itself would soon be submerged. To support the hard-pressed defenders of Aspern, St. Cyr's division was ordered to advance from the bridgehead. The 24th Light with the 4th and 46th Line attacked the church and drove the Austrians out, capturing 800 men, 11 officers, a general and six canons. Molitor's division was now moved back in reserve to rest.

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*Continued on page 79*



Austrian and French cuirassiers battle standard is imaginary: the five eagles

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On the French left, where the Berkowski Regiment took Aspern churchyard, Field Marshal Hiller ordered the Austrian pioneers to pull down the cemetery walls and set the church and parsonage on fire. In other parts of the field, French soldiers desperate to quit the battle were bandaging their own arms and legs in order to pass as wounded. Some tried to escape to Lobau by carrying the genuinely wounded, and a stretcher borne by three or four men was a common sight.

Napoleon badly needed Davout's corps to cross the river, but this was prevented by a fresh rupture of the Vienna bridge. The Danube was under flood and whipped by a strong wind that tore from its banks trees, stacks of fodder, rafts and boats, all of which went swirling downstream. The bridges were almost gone. Here and there were twelve, but there were wide intervening gaps with absolutely nothing to bridge them. The river had risen eight feet and was a third wider, rolling along full of floating objects—where the chains of the anchors had held, they were too short to save the boats. Large boats and rafts were coming downstream at the speed of a galloping horse, falling across the few portions of the bridges still intact.

The Austrians had put a small observation force on one of the islets, and its commanding officer had noticed, in a backwater where the local peasants were sheltering their live-stock, a huge water mill built on two boats, designed to operate while anchored in the middle of the river. This the Austrians now smothered in tar, filled with inflammable materials, set on fire and cut adrift on the current. Although it could have blown up at any moment, the French marines who were patrolling the river in small boats flung anchors, ropes and chains at it and managed to deflect it into an open space where a span of the bridge had already broken away.

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Archduke Charles had shown exceptional courage and leadership at Aspern-Essling, but his flawed grasp of overall strategy brought him to grief at Wagram.

Mounted on a fresh horse, wearing his full dress uniform and decorations, Lannes led his 25 battalions in attack column towards Breitenlee. Démont's division, made up largely of conscripts, was in reserve. The movement began well, and the French center went forward with the cavalry in support; as the Austrian line broke between Rosenberg's right and Hohenzollern's left, the French cavalry led by Bessières poured through the intervals of Lannes' column and into the gap. Bringing up his last reserve, the archduke seized an Austrian color and personally led its regiment to the charge. Lannes was checked, and in this crucial moment Napoleon learned that the Vienna bridge was now completely out of action. With his army cut off from Vienna and most of its ammunition gone, Napoleon decided on retreat. At 2 p.m. Masséna was ordered to take charge of a retirement to Lobau.

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*Continued on page 79*

# Eastern Front Revisited

## No general was secure in his job... on either side.

By William P. Bradley

Fifty years have passed since Adolf Hitler unleashed his Nazi war machine against Soviet Russia on June 22, 1941. The monuments and memorials still maintain their silent vigil over hallowed ground, as final tribute to the millions who once fought and died in that great conflict. And they will so stand for generations to come.

Now, though, on the 50th anniversary of the German invasion, those lost millions still give cause for reflection on a war that sowed the seeds of destruction for both Hitler and his "thousand-year" Reich.

And one very important means of reflection—one form of reminder—comes through books.

Colonel Albert Seaton's comprehensive study *The Russo-German War 1941-1945* (Presidio Press, 1990, \$37.50, originally published in 1971 by Praeger) revisits the men and machines of both sides, as well as the events that shaped those four long years of struggle. Seaton reminds us, however, that his book "is intended as a portrayal of war and not merely as a description of battles." It not only considers the clash of arms but also the political, economic and diplomatic factors that must be included if the portrayal is to be complete. And since, in the final analysis, people make war, politics, economics and diplomacy, his book "is about people."

The dictators Hitler and Stalin dominated all aspects of the war effort in their respective states, controlling all political and economic decision-making. They set strategic objectives, directed their military staffs with an iron hand and even, on occasion, intervened in tactical decisions best left to the military experts.

Disagreement with either dictator or military failure could lead to reprimand,



Although painted in the heady first days of Hitler's invasion of Russia, Franz Eichhorst's *A Crowd of Russian Prisoners* accurately—and prophetically—reveals the fatigue of their German captors.

"retirement," or worse for staff and field officers. After the encirclement of more than 20 Soviet divisions near Bialystok in June 1941, General D.G. Pavlov paid for the strategic disaster with his life. Differences of opinion between Stalin and General Georgi Zhukov regarding the defense of Kiev led to the latter's replacement as chief of the general staff. Zhukov, unlike the hapless Pavlov, however, lived to fight another day. By October he had been recalled by Stalin to conduct Moscow's defense.

Pavlov's and Zhukov's German counterparts found themselves in much the same position. A succession of these ranking officers, true professionals, fell prey to Hitler's anger and demand for total control and either "voluntarily" resigned or were dismissed. The list grew,

as did the war, and German military reversals multiplied.

Stalin, however, showed an increasing willingness to listen to his senior staff officers after his overambitious winter offensive of early 1942, while Hitler's refusal to share military planning with his staff became more pronounced.

And so Colonel Seaton talks of men and war. He describes the attitudes and capabilities of the fighting men and officers of both sides, the quality and effectiveness of their equipment and machines. But his narrative also follows the course of land, sea and air battles at a level of detail to delight the military history enthusiast.

On the other hand, the German occupation administration and the Soviet partisan movement are not treated in any detail here. Seaton himself points out that this is deliberate; to do justice to those topics would require separate volumes. Their omission, however, does not detract in any way from his book's excellent portrayal of this giant among 20th-century conflicts.

In another Eastern Front book worth our attention, Colonel David Glanz, chief of research with the Soviet Army Studies Office at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, examines the Soviet intelligence-gathering process in his *The Role of Intelligence in Soviet Military Strategy in World War II* (Presidio Press, 1990, \$27.50). This is Colonel Glanz's first publication for the American market, and his access to period Soviet sources enhances both the value and significance of his work.

Glanz traces the development of Soviet intelligence services (and their impact on strategic planning) from the first haphazard operations during the early war months to the sophisticated data-

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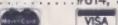
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collection and analysis that supported the Russian offensive effort after Stalingrad, all culminating in the capture of Berlin. His detailed study sheds welcome light on a heretofore largely unexplored aspect of the Russo-German war.

In still another interesting volume, former Soviet intelligence officer Viktor Suvorov proposes that Stalin was in fact preparing an offensive operation of his own in June of 1941, using the pending German invasion as an excuse to sweep west and "liberate" the oppressed peoples of Europe. He aptly titles his work *Icebreaker* (Viking, 1990, \$22.95), describing Hitler as Stalin's "icebreaker" to provide the provocation for Soviet involvement in the war and the eventual westward spread of communism.

Independent confirmation exists that Soviet deployments in the spring and summer of 1941 sometimes did appear to be offensive in nature. Even Seaton and Glanz reach similar conclusions, although citing different reasons for doing so. But Suvorov, after postulating Stalin's overall strategic intention, is unable to verify it, leaving the reader with nothing more than an informative description of the deployment effort—and a lot of questions that must await answers from future historians.

**1812: Napoleon's Russian Campaign**, by Richard K. Riehn, McGraw-Hill: New York, 1990, \$24.95.

Napoleon Bonaparte had known victory on battlefields the length and breadth of Europe. When Russia's Czar Alexander I assumed a recalcitrant and uncooperative posture in 1812, Napoleon on proposed an invasion using the same lightning strokes that had served him so successfully before.

While countless volumes have been written concerning the Napoleonic era, most recent efforts fail to break new ground. In his *1812: Napoleon's Russian Campaign*, however, military historian Richard K. Riehn jousts with commonly held beliefs as to why Napoleon's drive to Moscow failed.

Most notable among Riehn's revisionist arguments is his claim that the severity of the Russian winter did not cause the collapse of the *Grande Armée*. Riehn's exegesis of the debacle hinges on Napoleon's faulty tactics, his underestimate of Russia's vastness, Czar Alexander's will to resist—and on Napoleon's mistaken belief in the infallibility of his own genius.

By June 1812, Napoleon had assembled more than a half-million troops—the greatest concentration of soldierly Europe had ever seen. He had pored over the maps and studied descriptions of the feared Russian winter. He was confident that by destroying the enemy army and

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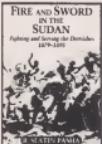


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capturing Moscow, he would force the czar to capitulate.

Napoleon's earlier successes in Europe had been based on brief campaigns marked by decisive, violent battles. The speed with which he was able to move his troops was partly dependent on short supply lines. While this enabled the army to maneuver rapidly it also required foraging as the chief means of supplying the army. Coupled with a corrupt supply bureaucracy, his commissariat proved unequal to the task when foraging in Russia became virtually impossible.

Though Napoleon realized the brutality of Russian winters, he overlooked summer climatic conditions in Eastern Europe. Torrential rains turned the few existing roads into quagmires that quickly decimated his supply of exhausted draft animals and cavalry mounts. When the rains stopped, hot, humid weather prevailed.

As the French wedge was driven into Russia, Napoleon tried to provoke the pitched battle he needed for a speedy triumph, a confrontation that Russian commander Barclay de Tolly sought to avoid. When the Russians finally did stand and fight at Smolensk and Borodino, neither battle was really decisive.

It is evident that the author has done his research. He calls upon many scarce Russian and German sources to paint his picture of the invasion. His descriptions of the French and Russian armies in terms of fighting styles and logistics are richly detailed.

His book, however, is not without its faults. The sheer volume of military maneuverings and endless skirmishes across the Russian landscape can be overwhelming to the casual reader; the trio of maps offered in the book are sorely inadequate.

As Napoleon retreated from Moscow, the loss of horses, coupled with the breakdown of discipline and the evident inadequacies of the commissariat, provided the impetus for a rout that was driven to its fatal climax by the sub-zero temperatures and blizzard conditions that finally arrived in November.

Nor was Napoleon himself up to snuff. The battlefield genius he had displayed earlier seemed to have left him. At critical junctures he was unable to make decisions, particularly at Smolensk and again on his protracted stay in Moscow. During the retreat, flashes of brilliance emerged, but these came far too late to save his army.

Riehn's effort is a welcome addition to the storehouse of information concerning Napoleon. His clear-cut analysis enables the reader to understand how the emperor's great undertaking became one of history's worst defeats.

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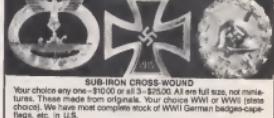
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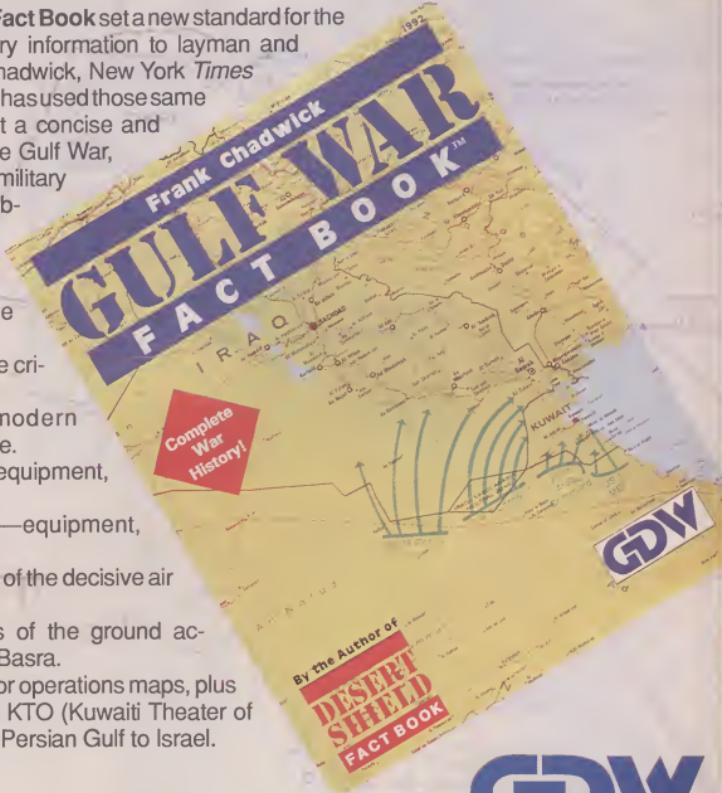
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## Foot Soldier's Valhalla

*What don't they remember at Fort Benning's National Infantry Museum?*

By Lynn Grisard Fullman

The Chattahoochee River, meandering along the border that separates Alabama and Georgia, cuts through Southern soil and, in one stretch, outlines Columbus, Georgia, a city shrouded in military history but few battles.

Columbus is home to the restored Iron Works that at one time produced Confederate cannons. Not far from the river is a Confederate naval museum.

Nothing located in the Columbus area, however, is more steeped in history than the National Infantry Museum at nearby Fort Benning, the world's largest and most modern center for infantry training, as well as Ranger and Airborne training. More than 100,000 visitors each year tour this repository of the American infantry soldier's history.

The museum building, with its red-tiled roof, sits on a knoll within the Main Post area of Fort Benning, established in 1918 and named to honor Columbus resident Maj. Gen. Henry L. Benning, who served in the Confederate Army.

Stained-glass symbols of infantry divisions on the museum's front windows overlook the sprawling post where thousands upon thousands of soldiers have been transformed into infantrymen.

Posted above the museum's entrance is the combat insignia that infantrymen receive when they participate in a recognized conflict—a musket encircled by a laurel wreath, the ancient symbol of honor and glory.

It was that very legacy of honor, glory and tradition that a number of dreamers, in 1957, hoped to preserve in an infantry museum. Two years after the idea was conceived, a small museum, with space only for a couple hundred artifacts,

opened in a wooden barracks. The collection remained there until moving in 1977 to a renovated post hospital.

Still there, the museum today is an integral part of the 182,000-acre Fort Benning. Dick D. Grube, an Army officer who is the museum's director, believes that the Fort Benning collection, while honoring the infantrymen, should appeal both to those who have seen battle and to those who haven't.

The weapons, tanks, uniforms, flags, swords, jeeps, parachutes and other memorabilia on display breathe life into memories of war and conflict. The collection, which includes 10 stored artifacts for every one on display, is a

showcase for two centuries of American military history.

Ask Grube what one thing he'd save if the museum were on fire, and he must struggle for an answer. There are, Grube says, a great many important relics—an 18th-century infantryman's musket; oil paintings; bronzes; sterling silver by Caldwell and Company dating to 1850; a European tapestry at least 400 years old; letters signed by every U.S. president; Hitler's diamond-studded field baton; and a painting of the nation's last five-star general, Omar Bradley.

Grube wrinkles his brow and ponders because, he explains, it is through looking at everything that the "collection paints the infantry's history."

After much mental sorting and pondering, however, Grube decides that maybe he'd first save the one item that alone exemplifies the infantryman's legacy: the Medal of Honor. The medal on display here was awarded to Lt. Col. Keith L. Ware for heroism in France in December 1944. (The same World War II hero died when his helicopter was shot down near the Cambodian border in September 1968.)

Grube points out that the medal, established some 130 years ago, has been awarded only 3,000 times. Of those awards, 2,000 were given to infantrymen.

Even though there are at least 70 other military museums, he says also, "No-body covers from 1775 to yesterday like we do." A lot of visitors, Grube adds, leave the museum with tears streaming down their faces. "They can't believe this collection exists."

Until late last year, survey sheets indicated that visitors wanted most to see material on the Vietnam era. "That was their war, their dad's or their husband's,"



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says Grube of his visitors, ranging from school kids to veterans, from mothers to active-duty personnel. In the aftermath of the recent Persian Gulf War, of course, the visitation focus may switch.

Meanwhile, the museum's extensive World War II exhibits seem to satisfy veterans of that war, according to the informal survey results. Many of those veterans, Grube says, see the collection and are reminded of artifacts they have at home. Those veterans, he adds: "need to realize that their memorabilia could be added to the collection. They need to make arrangements to donate the relics, or they might end up in a garage sale."

The "Chattahoochee Choo Choo," which from 1920 to 1946 took troops from Fort Benning's Main Post to distant rifle ranges, now stands outside the museum, along with tanks and heavy-artillery pieces. (Some have estimated that while in service the Choo Choo must have carried some 13 million passengers more than a total of 3.5 million miles.)

Even military music is showcased by displays of instruments that range from the Revolutionary War period to today, and which include a bugle from 1840 and a violin that a soldier carved from an ammunition packing crate during the Vietnam War.

Visitors to the museum come not just from the base, but from other states and even other countries. Knowing how much appeal the museum has, Grube, if he "could wave a magic wand," would add directional signs from nearby Interstate Route 85 to the museum.

If more people knew about the museum, the number of visitors would mushroom, believes Grube. He directed the museum as a lieutenant colonel in the Army and after his 1973 retirement became the museum's civilian director.

Because the collection includes thousands of pieces, it is difficult, at best, to point out all that's contained inside the white building, he explains. Some items, however, bear mention in any context—a faded flag carried in 1846 in the Mexican War; an 1841 book dealing with infantry tactics during the Mexican War; and a Confederate collection that includes a Rebel uniform of Georgia butternut rather than the usual gray.

Also on display are: General Benning's diary, in part recording his return trip to Columbus from Appomattox Court House; one of the three documents signed by President Kennedy the day he was assassinated; a document signed by Civil War quartermaster William McKinley, who later became a U.S. president; a major collection of Japanese martial arts ("probably the world's largest collection," Grube says); a mammoth Nazi

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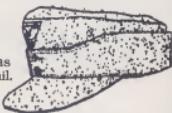
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flag; a bust of Benito Mussolini; documents signed by Hitler; an uncut and unbound edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*; a piece of the brown marble library table given to Hitler by Mussolini; a field marshal's baton once carried by Italian commander Rudolfo Graziani; and thousands more such items.

"You can see," Grube says, "that the museum is more than a collection of things painted OD [olive drab] green."

Although the museum got its start as a haphazard collection of memorabilia housed in a barracks, today the 50,000-square-foot display area of dioramas, display cases, flags, photographs, books and weapons ranks as one of the Army's most impressive museums.

Much of what Grube learned in other military museums he has incorporated into Fort Benning's museum. For instance, he believes that museums should be places where people are not discouraged by a bunch of "don'ts"—"don't do this" and "don't do that."

Meanwhile, the military history that's chronicled "inside" the Georgia museum begins, actually, outside, where tanks and cannons are on display, setting the tone for what awaits inside. One plaque outside the museum was placed there in memory of the Army's first black paratroopers, members of the 555th Parachute Infantry "Triple Nickel" Battalion, which fought forest fires from Idaho to Arizona during World War II and later saw combat in Korea.

It seems appropriate that the Columbus area should be a center of military memorabilia—Columbus has never itself been a battleground, but during the Civil War the area produced uniforms, swords, firearms, plating for Confederate ironclads, and steam engines for fighting vessels. One week after the South surrendered, Union forces stormed across the winding Chattahoochee River and wrecked the Columbus industries.

Today's visitors to Columbus will find that the area is rich with other attractions outside of Fort Benning. For instance, there are restored homes nestled in a historic district which preserves the city's roots, an art museum, an opera house, a state park and wartime President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Little White House," which remains much the same as it was when he died there in 1945. Also within driving distance is Callaway Gardens, a 12,000-acre tract of trails, flowers, lakes and gardens. For more information about the museum, write National Infantry Museum, Fort Benning, GA 31905, or phone 404-545-2958. For details on other attractions in the Columbus area, contact the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau, 801 Front Ave., P.O. Box 2768, Columbus, GA 31902, or call 1-800-999-1613. □

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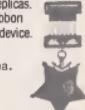
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## ESPIONAGE

Continued from page 10

of these vessels in any form by the Patriots, Collins "ordered them to be fired and destroyed."

Determined to destroy this "principal resort of the nest of pirates" once and for all, Ferguson and Collins had the entire village put to the torch. Most of the captured goods escaped the flames, since the early warnings had permitted their removal to hiding places in the woods.

With the entire countryside arming around them, the British were conscious of their precarious position in Chestnut Neck. Ferguson felt it prudent to return to the safety of the ships and, on October 7, he ordered the troops reembarked. There was, however, an unforeseen delay in the British plans to sail for New York—Collins' flagship, the *Zebra*, and the *Vigilant* went aground on a sandbar. This set in motion the events that made the Egg Harbor raid infamous in the eyes of many Americans.

With the British destruction of Chestnut Neck almost completed, the 300-strong Pulaski Legion reached the nearby "Middle of the Shore" on October 8, in time to observe the king's troops returning to the ships. Polish cavalryman Pulaski's command consisted of three companies of light infantry, three troops of light horse, and a detachment of Colonel Thomas Proctor's Pennsylvania Artillery, equipped with one brass fieldpiece. At his disposal also were various New Jersey militia units.

The main section of the Polish Legion encamped in concealed positions on a farm along the Little Egg Harbor Bay. An advance picket post, consisting of about 50 infantrymen, was placed half a mile away on another section of what was Osborn (or Mincok) Island, commanded by Lt. Col. Baron de Rose, the second in rank of the Legion.

It appears that, with the British objectives met, the baron felt they would not land again. He ordered few precautions or defensive measures taken to ensure his command's protection. He probably felt secure in the knowledge that the main body of the Legion was nearby to offer support if required.

Within the Legion's ranks, unfortunately, was Lieutenant Gustav Juliet, a deserter from one of Britain's Hessian Langgrave regiments. He had been sent by the Congressional Board of War "to serve as a volunteer in the infantry of General Pulaski's Legion, and have the pay and subsistence of a lieutenant for his support." This was not an uncommon practice, since the Legion primarily consisted of deserters and former prisoners of war who had transferred their alle-

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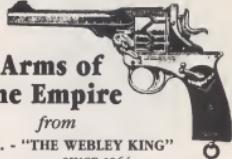
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giance from the British Crown to the American cause. Allegedly, Juliet and the Baron de Boe quarreled over some issue while at the picket post, a dispute that caused the turncoat to seek revenge.

During the afternoon of October 13, Juliet apparently decided to switch sides once again. Using the pretext of taking a fishing excursion onto the bay, he made his escape. He reduced three of the men on board the small boat to a drunken state and convinced the others to go over to the British. When the men did not return, the baron assumed they had accidentally drowned.

It is quite evident that once Juliet reached the British vessels, he gave the enemy commanders the exact positions of Pulaski's troops, emphasizing Baron de Boe's lack of proper security measures. In addition, Juliet gained further revenge on his former comrades by spreading a lie, which Ferguson noted: "Mr. Pulaski has in public orders, lately directed no quarter to be given..." This false statement would later have terrible repercussions. For now, though, armed with all of this secret information, Ferguson decided, according to Captain Collins, that "a safe attempt might be made to surprise" de Boe's force.

In the end, Juliet would receive his just reward for turning traitor. Initially, the deserter from Hessian raids managed to avoid arrest by giving the British a false name. Ferguson referred to him in dispatches as "a Frenchman, named Bromville." Upon the expedition's return to New York later, Juliet was recognized and subsequently imprisoned.

Late in the evening of October 14, meanwhile, Ferguson, accompanied by the traitorous Juliet and soldiers, plus a detachment of marines, embarked in the fleet's row-galleys for the baron's camp. The British covered the 10 miles across the bay in approximately five hours, reaching the opposing shore without incident at approximately 4 a.m. The landing on the small island occurred without incident, as the troops discovered a strategic bridge over a creek undefended. In contrast to de Boe, Ferguson wisely stationed "50 men for its defense" and to cover his eventual withdrawal.

Ferguson's remaining troops continued to advance on the unsuspecting Patriot positions, overpowering a lone sentry along the island's main road. When they reached the baron's command post, they found it protected by only a few men on guard duty. Ferguson quickly decided to attack with his entire force, counting on total surprise to give him victory.

A confusing melee erupted in the early-morning darkness. The baron attempted to prepare a defense, but was quickly identified by Juliet with, reportedly, shouts of, "This is the Colonel, kill him!"

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Although fighting "like a lion" with sword and pistols, Juliet's urgencies and the villainous lie concerning Pulaski's "no quarter" took their toll. The baron fell to several British bayonets.

Accounts vary as to the losses suffered by the baron's command during this brief but bloody engagement. Ferguson was reported in Rivington's *Loyalist Gazette* to have "numbered among the dead about 50," while Pulaski later "esteemed" to the Congress the losses of "dead, wounded, and absent at about 25 or 30 men." For the British, accounts again varied. Ferguson reported his "loss of two men of the Fifth and one of the Provincial," with about three soldiers wounded. Pulaski estimated 30 British were killed.

The roar of the battle aroused Pulaski from his slumber a short distance away. The count and his light cavalry "mounted in hot haste" in the hope of supporting de Rose's defense. Ferguson, supplied with Juliet's information that he was outnumbered, had ordered a withdrawal to the waiting boats. The British rear guard stationed at the bridge provided covering fire and removed the bridge's planks to hinder Pulaski's horsemen. By mid-afternoon, the British had "re-embarked in security" and returned to their fleet.

The Patriot forces still had much to learn on the subject of taking proper defensive measures and precautions. Baron de Rose, for instance, for all his gallantry in battle might properly have been court-martialed, if he had lived, for his obvious military negligence. Then, too, after the battle, the word "massacre" often was coupled with the name of this event.

On the surface, it seems cold and callous of Ferguson to report in regard to Little Egg Harbor that "being a night attack, little quarter could, of course, be given." It should be remembered that the rules of proper military conduct during this era excused the actions of a night attack for all parties, due to the amount of confusion and general difficulties in the darkness. It should also be recalled that Juliet incited the British by falsely planting in their minds Pulaski's supposed order of "no quarter."

From all general appearances, the "Little Egg Harbor Affair" was a triumph for the British, since the village of Chestnut Neck was never rebuilt as a community. However, the primary mission of eliminating the privateer menace was a total failure. Within six weeks, Chestnut Neck was again a vibrant privateer center, with its ships attacking and capturing more British shipping than ever. In fact, the only ships destroyed during the raid were those of the king's subjects. In addition, Captain Colling's flagship, the *Zebra*, was never refloated from the sandbar and had to be set on fire to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. □

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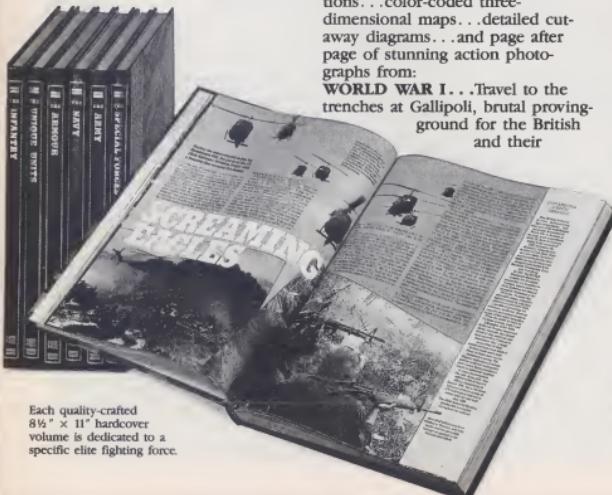
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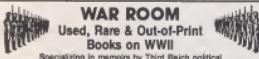
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## NAPOLEON

Continued from page 59

battalions of Young Guard fusiliers. At this juncture Bessières' senior aide de camp, César de Laville, had just returned from one of the French cavalry charges. Just as Rapp was setting off for Aspern, Laville galloped up to him, pointed to the Austrian masses advancing from Essling, and told him urgently, "If you don't support General Mouton, he's going to be crushed." As he was drawing up in the rear of Mouton at Essling, Rapp claimed, the whole of Charles' reserve of grenadiers deployed on his front.

"Let's charge them with the bayonet," Rapp suggested to Mouton. "If it comes off, we'll both get the credit; if it doesn't, I'll take the blame." Then, said Rapp later, "Our five battalions moved forward, charged, repulsed and dispersed the enemy at bayonet point." Mouton and General Gros were both wounded in the action. As the prisoners taken in the cemetery were too numerous for either Rapp or Mouton to guard, they were dispatched forthwith among the tombstones.

As the French withdrawal went on, the archduke concentrated on the flank of his enemy's center, now slowly retiring on the bridges. Only the steadiness of Lannes saved Napoleon from utter disaster at this stage of the battle.

Steadiness was needed, for as the retirement went on, the pontoon bridge to Lobau gave way. Baron Lejeune was sent to organize repairs. By means of ropes, trestles, beams and planks laid crosswise, Lejeune managed to have the pontoons connected, keeping contact with Lobau a little longer. When he reported back after completing this mission, Napoleon sent him to find out how much longer Lannes could hold out.

Lannes' horses had all been killed. Lejeune found him crouching with his staff behind a slight rise in the ground, exposed to enemy fire from the waist up. He had 300 grenadiers left. Soon afterwards a shot struck Lannes as he was sitting cross-legged on a wall, smashing the kneecap of one leg and tearing the sinews of the other.

"Two or three officers, wounded themselves, with a few grenadiers and dismounted cuirassiers, carried him to a little wood where first aid was given," wrote Lejeune later.

Soon afterwards Lannes was delivered into the hands of Surgeon General Dominique-Jean Larrey, who amputated one of the marshal's legs.

At 7 o'clock that evening Marshal Masséna went back to Lobau for a conference at Napoleon's headquarters, then returned to the left bank to supervise the

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battle that Napoleon could have lost on  
the burned and bloody village grounds of  
Aspern-Essling. "Could have" . . . but  
what counts the more is the victory he  
salvaged in the end at Wagram. □

David Johnson, a Napoleon scholar for  
years, writes from his base in England. He  
is the author of *The French Cavalry, 1792-1815*, published in 1989 by Belmont  
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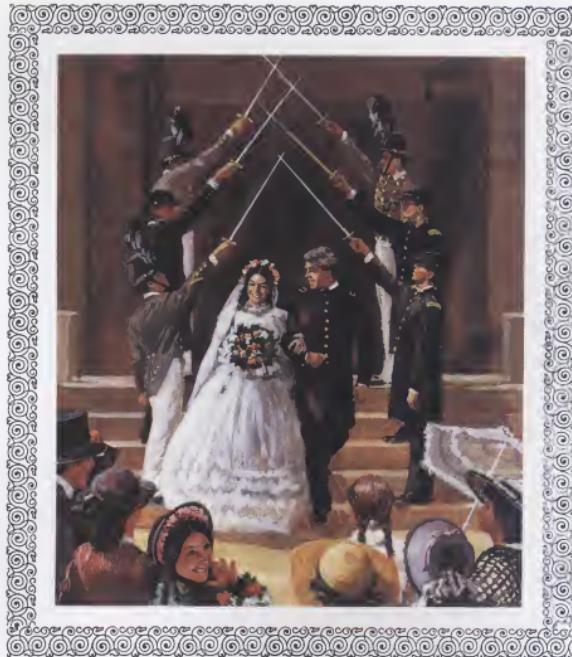
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